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ABSTRACT

Noting that parents' response to their children is essentially emotional and keyed almost exclusively to inferences about their children's emotions, this program for parents teaches compassionate parenting, an approach that provides a secure emotional base from which children explore and interact with their environment as parents develop the protective, nurturing, and compassionate skills that empower them in all areas of life. Part 1 of the program guide describes how compassionate parenting contributes to children's emotional intelligence; outlines the elements of compassionate parenting; discusses the emotions related to attachment; identifies compassion as the self-building emotion; and describes how emotions convey one's ability to cope and how compassionate parenting promotes a compassionate identity. This part also discusses the development of meaning, the components of emotion and motivation, and the use of punishment in rearing children. Part 2 of the guide presents general skills for compassionate parenting, including regulating anger, changing emotional regulation habits, using values and core values in emotional regulation, guiding emotional investment in children, and teaching compassion and emotional vocabulary. This part also presents home play therapy as a structure to maximize parental interest in children. In addition, this part presents rules for effective discipline and discusses how children learn to anticipate consequences. Ways to empower children are presented, along with a family empowerment agreement and a step-by-step technique for resolving disputes. Part 3 presents specific skills for compassionate parenting of children of various ages from infancy through adolescence. The guide's seven appendices include a scale for parents to rate their core self as parents, lessons for building emotional vocabulary, and steps of emotional regulation for adolescents. (KB)

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CompassionPOWER

Presents

Compassionate Parenting

Steven Stosny, Ph.D.

Practice of Compassionate Parenting is guaranteed to increase cooperation, self-esteem, and self-discipline, while reducing resentment, anger, and hostility in children and in parents.

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Regular practice of the Compassionate Parenting program carries a *guarantee.* Both children *and* adults will enjoy substantial increases in cooperation, self-esteem, and self-discipline, with corresponding reductions in anger, resentment, and hostility. Compassionate Parenting will make your home life more pleasant and harmonious than you could have ever imagined.

The program transcends mere technique by deepening connections among all family members. Through the extraordinary leverage of these deeper emotional connections, compassionate parents help their children easily develop the crucial **Five R's**:

- **Resourcefulness**
- **Responsibility**
- **Respect**
- **Relationship investment**
- **Regulation of impulses and emotions.**

Compassionate Parenting provides a secure emotional base from which children carry out their genetic programs to explore and interact with their environments in safety and protection. At the same time, parents develop the protective, nurturing, and compassionate skills that empower them in all areas of life, including work and health. We simply function at our best when we have emotional connections with our children that are strong, flexible, and enjoyable.

Compassion most definitely does not mean letting children get away with bad or selfish behavior. It does not mean that parents should go along with whatever children want. Nor does it mean overindulgence, generosity, or magnanimity. Compassionate parents are able to see beneath the surface of their children's behavior to get at the deeper *motivations.* They empower children to control their own behavior by teaching them to regulate their motivations.

Compassionate Parenting is certainly not perfect parenting. The best parents in the world do not go a single day without making some error in what they do or say to their children. Fortunately, kids are extremely resilient when it comes to parental mistakes. A major tenet of the Compassionate Parenting program is that whatever parents say and do matters far less than their emotional motivation. Specific motivations of specific emotions will be discussed later. Right now we'll list the major positive, negative, and destructive motivations.

Positive	Negative	Destructive
Approach (interest, enjoyment) **Protect** **Nurture** **Encourage** **Cooperate** **Promote child's best interests through influence/guidance/ limit-setting**	**Control** **Criticize** **Manipulate** **Avoid** **Ignore** **Withdraw**	**Dominate/Demand/ Coerce/Threaten** **Reject/Attack** (verbally or physically)

Unless the child is in a destructive mode, almost anything a parent says or does in the positive mode will succeed. In fact, experiments show that children perceive even highly critical statements done with positive motivation as caring and encouraging.

Regardless of what mode the child is in, almost nothing the parent says or does in the negative or destructive modes will work. **Parents must not match the negative and destructive motivations of their children in kind. Doing so only reinforces them and teaches kids the dangerous lesson that the one with the most power to be negative and destructive wins.**

Techniques to help get you into a positive mode and to get your children into positive modes are presented in Parts II and III of this work.

Compassionate Parenting and Emotional Intelligence

Our response to our children, from the very beginning of their lives, is essentially emotional and keyed almost exclusively to inferences about *their* emotions. We respond directly to their behavior only when it violates a safety boundary. Otherwise, our reactions are **automatic** responses to their **emotional states**, which we *infer* from their behavior or appearance. The inferred emotional states of our children, in relation to our perceived ability to cope with them, tell us when to approach, avoid, discipline, or punish them. The most crucial task of Compassionate Parenting is to use the potent emotional connection with children to mutual advantage. Our emotions must become *intelligent* to serve them and us with maximum efficiency.

Research has shown that emotional intelligence is more important to success in school and, later, in work and relationships, than intellectual intelligence, expressed as IQ. Emotional intelligence is the ability to:

- understand one's own emotions;
- regulate them for the most productive behavior;
- muster high levels of motivation;
- understand the emotions of others.

The good news about these research findings is that emotional intelligence is teachable. Unlike IQ, which varies little over the life span, emotional intelligence can be greatly increased through practice of the sort of skills laid out in this work. The regular practice of Compassionate Parenting *automatically* increases the emotional intelligence of parents *and* children.

Emotional Intelligence Means Taking the Long View

Emotions are present in children before birth and reach developmental capacity by age five. The ability to think through the consequences of behavior develops much more slowly. This sophisticated capacity of the brain does not fully mature until age 25, which is why we do so many foolish things before that age. Primary emotions are innate short-term motivations for *immediate* behavior. Thinking through the consequences of behavior is a slowly developing afterthought of the human brain. For adults,

the intelligent use of emotions requires regulation of immediate motivation by long-term estimations of one's best interests. However, we cannot expect children to have any proficiency at doing this, no matter how much we lecture, control, or cajole them. Indeed, how often do we fail to act in our own long-term best interests even with mature brain development? Compassionate Parenting teaches children to change the motivation of their emotions, to replace a negative or destructive motivation with a positive one, *and* to sustain and deepen interest in selected areas. The continuous reinforcement necessary to habituate this crucial skill comes not from the parent but from the child's own enhanced experience of interest and enjoyment.

Except for moments of imperiled health or safety, compassionate parents always take the long view of their entire *relationship* with their children, which requires heavy investments of support and trust. What's more, the goal of compassionate parents is to make themselves completely unnecessary to their children, to help them develop life skills that will enable them to take care of themselves and, eventually, to take care of their own children. Of course, this is a very gradual and long-term process. But we never merely address the immediate behavior of a child. We build behavior skills in our children. Sometimes the seeds planted by a compassionate parent will not flower in the child for many years, as we slowly prepare our children for their lifetimes.

Elements of Compassionate Parenting

Learn from your children

- Understand their experience of the world.
- Understand their emotional motivations.
- Understand your emotional responses to them.
- Understand your own emotional motivations.

Enjoy your children

- Include brief moments (just a second or two) of appreciation and relaxation in all time spent with your children.
- Make a daily time of uninterrupted enjoyment activity - just 10 minutes a day can do it.

Value your children

- Appreciate how important they are to your life.
- Appreciate how important you are to their lives.
- Teach them respect by respecting them.

Guide your children

- Help them internalize encouragement to grow and learn.
- Help them use their awareness and intelligence for growth and development.

Empower your children

- Teach them emotional regulation.
- Teach them the power of compassion.
- Model emotional intelligence.
- Teach them values.
- Give them the right and confidence to solve problems in *everyone's* best interest.

Discipline your children

- Help them behave in their short *and* long term best interests.
- Help them develop self-discipline.

Give Affection

- Express appreciation and interest, through eye contact, cuddling, cooing, soothing, and hugging.
- Model affection with other adults.

Allow them to be themselves

- Allow your children to explore different aspects of themselves.
- Allow them to develop their fullest potential as individual human beings.

Caveat

This work concerns the **emotional development** of children and parents. It assumes that parents will meet all physical needs of their children with good nutrition and health care, including regular visits to the pediatrician.

Emotions:
The Mechanism of Attachment and Survival

Attachment relationships are those in which we form interactive emotional bonds, such that the experience of emotion in them stimulates the experience of a similar emotion in us. Attachment figures always include parents, children, lovers, siblings, and, sometimes, good friends.

Attachment has profound effects on the well being of adults and children. Most unhealthy life patterns, including suicide, alcoholism, and other self-destructive behavior, as well as a great deal of physical and emotional illness, occur during periods of painful attachment (fighting, abuse, and emotional distance), or in periods of detachment through separation, divorce, or death.

The emotional stakes of attachment, which remain high throughout the life span, are most critical during infancy and early childhood. Attachment has life or death importance to infants. The only thing they can do for survival is attach to caregivers who will protect, soothe, and nurture them. Infants fail to thrive and often die without attachment behavior, even when their physical needs are met.

The capacity to forge strong attachment bonds is probably the single most important contributor to the survival of human beings. Formidable limitations of early humans made negotiation of an unforgiving environment precarious. Our human predecessors lacked claws, sharp teeth, speed, agility, and strength; they could not see, smell, or hear as well as competitive predators. More important to early survival than primitive intelligence was the ability to form tightly knit social units that struggled cooperatively to endure. One person against a saber-tooth tiger had no chance. But five fighting together would prevail.

Because it necessitated that individuals risk their lives to help others, this cooperative drive, fueled by primitive psychological precursors of *compassion*, had to be reflexive, automatic, and stronger than the instinct for self-preservation. We will rush to the aid of an imperiled child with little regard to our own safety. In addition, this reflexive response had to provide a

powerful internal reward. The internal reinforcement took the form of an enhanced sense of self and a general feeling of self-esteem and well being. The person who defended a child attacked by a predator felt *great* about himself, that is, important, valuable, and worthy of love.

But positive reward was not always sufficient to ensure survival. The negative reinforcement for failing at compassion exacted just the opposite experience: A person who cowered behind a rock while a child succumbed to a predator would suffer severe guilt, shame, and abandonment-anxiety.

The survival necessity of attachment bonds stacked the deck with potent emotional rewards for success and punishment for failure. In modern times, the emotional rewards of attachment are among the highest available: interest, enjoyment, compassion, trust, and love, while the penalties for failed attachment are among the worst imaginable: guilt, shame, and fear of abandonment.

How Attachment Happens

Attachment occurs when an infant's cries for nurturing, soothing, and protection are answered by caregivers. A bond between the needing infant and the nurturing caregiver rises from a feedback loop of **emotional attunement** that works like this. Distress in the infant causes distress in the caregiver. (That is why adults have violent physical reactions when they cannot answer the distress cry of an infant.) The behavior that alleviates the distress in the infant – feeding, changing, cuddling, vocalizing, touching, etc. – alleviates distress in the caregiver. The same emotional attunement process works when the parent, and later, the infant, expresses interest or enjoyment that alters the emotional state of the other. Attachment behavior works like a tuning fork that tunes the emotions of both parties into more pleasant experience. The result is an interactive emotional bond that normally lasts a lifetime. Most of the profound meaning we place on attachment relationships originates in this emotional attunement.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of the human condition rises from the darker side of attachment. The force of emotional attunement is so deep and so important to the survival of the species that it can easily become difficult to distinguish loved ones, particularly children, from our emotional responses

to them. In the forging of emotional bonds, the only apparent option in regulating one's own emotions lies in concerted influence on the behavior of the loved one. I must do something to the child or lover, or get them to do something, to replace my anxiety, distress, guilt, and shame with interest and enjoyment. It is very easy to fall victim to the destructive belief that loved ones are an extension of the self and that self-regulation means controlling the behavior of loved ones.

Compassionate Parenting demonstrates value of and respect for the uniqueness of each parent and child in the family. Self-regulation by parents models this all-important skill to children.

Attachment Emotions:

Interest/Enjoyment
Compassion
Trust
Love
Security
Guilt/Shame/Fear of abandonment

Interest is the primary attachment emotion. Bonds are difficult to form without it and tend to weaken as it wanes. Interest motivates the cooperative behavior so crucial to human survival and to family well being. Showing interest in our children guides *their* interest and promotes their cooperation.

The motivation of interest is to learn more and to understand more. Because it requires relatively high investments of conscious attention, we constantly take breaks to relax in appreciation of what we have learned or understood. The experience of these usually brief periods of relaxation is called **enjoyment**. This is easier to notice in children who are less self-conscious than adults when it comes to observation. If you watch any sustained behavior by young children, you will see high levels of interest punctuated by brief periods of relaxation where they just smile, sense, and appreciate the objects of their interest, usually toys or other things to which they attach fantasies.

If interest and enjoyment do not go together, the "breaks" from the concentration required of interest are usually filled by distracting emotions, such as anxiety, guilt, or shame, or hyper-focusing emotions such as anger and distress.

Compassion is the most important attachment emotion because it provides motivation for the emotional attunement that forges, sustains, and deepens attachment bonds. Compassion is a special kind of interest directed at deeper emotional experience. The elements of compassion are:

- Perspective taking – understanding the perspective of the child, what the world seems like to him or her at a troubled moment. This necessarily means seeing beneath undesired behavior to the emotions *motivating* the behavior. In taking the perspective of the child, parents teach perspective taking in the most powerful form of behavioral instruction: *modeling*.

- Sympathizing – showing that you care about his or her emotions (not just the problem behavior)

- Motivating – helping the child to change the emotion that motivates his/her troubled behavior, not through fear, guilt, or shame, but through *healing*, *correcting*, *improving*, and *understanding the perspectives of others*.

Compassion works best when compassion for self is in balance with compassion for the other. Thus compassionate behavior creates positive emotional attunement with maximum individual integrity. It provides what people all over the world find most satisfying: the experience of sympathetic understanding of loved ones, while feeling sympathetically understood by them.

Compassion increases self-knowledge and deepens knowledge of others. Failure of compassion reinforces ignorance of the internal states of self and others. Self-compassion provides the self-regulation that produces personal security. Compassion for others provides relationship security.

An abundance of pity and dearth of genuine compassion has doomed many parenting efforts. Pity requires an assumption of superiority, e.g., God pities us; we pity the poor and downtrodden. Though it flows from a kind heart, the nature of pity leads to resentment and hostility on both sides. Those we pity, including our children, make us feel guilty, angry, and frustrated, while provoking their resentment of the inequality made more prominent by our pity. Pity for our children motivates behavior that keeps them dependent and inferior. Compassion motivates behavior to help them realize their fullest human potential.

Intensity and complexity give **love** the most bonding power. Yet it is by no means the most important attachment emotion. Love without interest soon becomes boring. Love without compassion is possessive, controlling, and dangerous. What has been called "the thin line between love and hate" is actually love without compassion.

Trust is the ability to regulate fear and shame by predicting the behavior of others. Trust allows us to overlook lapses in interest, compassion, and cooperation in the knowledge that they will be available when truly needed.

Security is a kind of trust that results from the sum total of all the attachment emotions. It is an emotional sense that whenever any of the other attachment emotions are needed to ward off fear and shame, they will be available from the attachment figure. Security, like compassion, requires a balance of self-regulation—one's ability to regulate fear and shame internally—and trust that the relationship can deliver emotional support when necessary.

Guilt occurs whenever we fail to sustain any of the positive attachment emotions. It also inhibits behavior that damages attachment bonds, such as deceit, abuse, and other forms of betrayal. **Shame** happens when someone else fails at a positive attachment emotion for you. **Fear of abandonment** follows severe guilt or shame, raising doubts about one's capacity to cope without the attachment bond.

Guilt, shame, and fear of abandonment are hard to detect because they are usually expressed as some form of anger, such as resentment, irritability, impatience, or an "attitude." We learn in toddlerhood to regulate the pain

they bring with anger. If a toddler's temper tantrums provoke harsh physical punishment, the anger hardens into cruelty. If the punishment is emotional, it turns to resentment. If humiliating, it becomes rage. In any case, the pain-relief of anger and resentment, with their motivation to punish, attack, or avoid, pervert the natural motivation of guilt, shame, and fear of abandonment: to reinstate interest, enjoyment, compassion, trust, love, and security.

The inability to regulate anxiety, guilt, and shame internally produces personal **insecurity**. With low emotional regulation skill, children require heavy doses of security from their relationships. They draw on family reserves of security far more than they contribute to them. For this reason, insecure adults, who themselves need heavy doses of security from relationships, may see children as burdens. Secure individuals, like compassionate parents, require far less from relationships. They find strength in giving, particularly in building the emotional regulation skills of children.

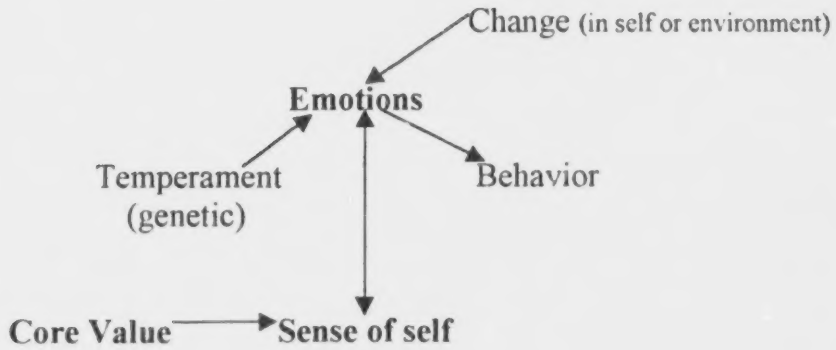
Compassion: The Self-Building Emotion

Children come out of the womb with highly charged expectations that someone will meet their emotional and physical needs. These emotional expectations imply a kind of **Core Value** or worthiness to have one's needs met with affection. As children mature, Core Value tells them how important, valuable, loving, and lovable they are as well as the kind of treatment they can expect from attachment figures as it forms the foundation of personal:

- **security**
- **well-being, self-esteem**
- **competence, creativity**
- **power.**

If Core Value is reinforced by the compassionate behavior of caregivers, the child's emotional experience can develop into a strong and stable sense of self. For such a fortunate person, emotions guide and enrich life with high levels of interest and enjoyment.

If an infant's Core Value is invalidated, i.e., emotional needs are not met with compassion, shame continually disorganizes normal emotional patterns. Unless the child is blessed with a high level of emotional regulation skill, the result is an insecure and unstable sense of self or one prone to depression with low levels of interest and enjoyment. The self is reduced to emotional experience and, for better or worse (usually worse), **we are what we feel**.

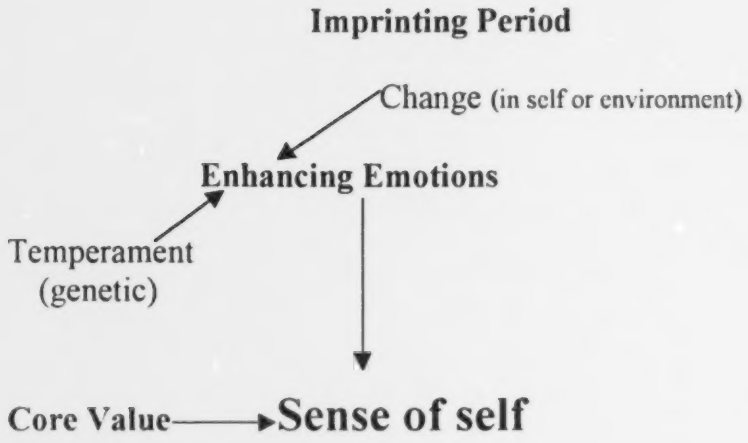


Compassion, Self-knowledge, Imprinting

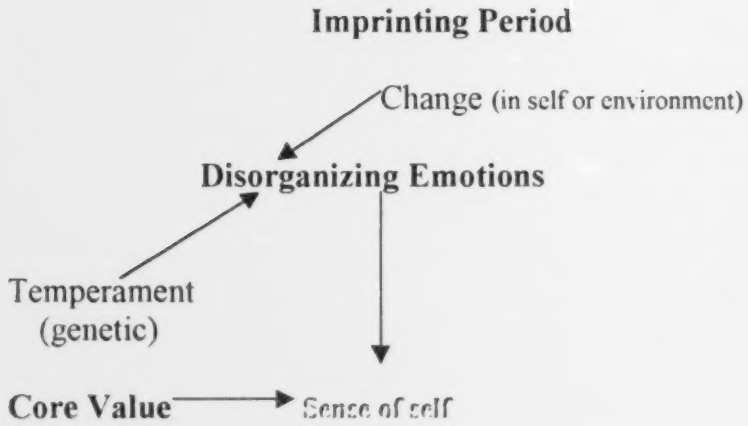
The child's developing brain must learn how to respond to the world it inhabits, which means learning about his or her capacities and limitations. This **self-knowledge** component of emotion accumulates in the first years of life, during an *imprinting* period of accelerated learning. Children go through several imprinting periods for learning the basic skills they use to learn more advanced and refined skills throughout life. For instance, in the first three years of school, children learn to read. For the rest of their school careers, they read to learn.

What children learn about the self during imprinting periods forms the base of their perspectives for viewing the world—the camera tripod if you will—as well as the lens through which they see themselves. What they learn about the self is driven by emotional adaptation. (A child called "short" may feel less than his peers. One called "smart" may feel greater than yet nonetheless isolated from hers.) But as imprinting periods wane, emotions grow virtually immune to corrective input by the thinking brain. For this reason, Compassionate Parenting focuses on the emotional response of children, especially their **motivational** response.

Enhancing and disorganizing emotions experienced during imprinting periods especially influence the child's "tripod and lens." Enhancing emotions are interest, enjoyment, conviction, and compassion. Disorganizing emotions are guilt and shame. The ability to sustain broad streams of interest during imprinting periods produces a general sense of confidence, optimism, and enthusiasm difficult to attain later in life.



Reactions to mistakes, rejections, and failures early in life lead to global assessments about the self: ("I'm a failure, inadequate, unworthy, or unlovable."), with far greater frequency than reactions to mistakes and failures later in life.



Fortunately, most behaviors of children are motivated by interest, with continuous "breaks" of enjoyment. Children's experience of interest and enjoyment, unlike that of adults, is almost always arousal-driven and surface-oriented. They tend to be excited or distractible or not interested at all. Compassionate Parenting encourages children to follow their interest

beneath the surface of things, to deepen and widen it for optimal knowledge and skill building.

Ability to Cope

Emotions convey far more information about the current state of the self than about the stimulus of the emotion. A child's toys cluttering the floor provokes one emotional response after the parent's great day at work and a quite different one at the end of a day filled with failure and disappointment. The extreme difference in response derives not from the child's behavior but from the parent's perceived ability to cope with it.

A child's temper tantrum comes less from stubbornness or willfulness than from a perceived inability to cope with disappointment. Compassionate Parenting increases children's perceived ability to cope by teaching them to solve problems in their own short *and* long-term best interests.

Compassionate Identity

Identity exerts far-reaching influence on thoughts, feelings, and behavior. The profound ripple effect of identity owes to its function as an organizer of experience and a selection filter of information the brain processes. The brain looks for information consonant with identity and overlooks disconfirming or contradictory data. People who identify with defects or weaknesses tend to see only negative aspects of themselves and their experience. People who identify with their humanity appreciate human frailty and look for the good in themselves and others.

Compassionate Parenting instills a sense of fairness in children from the very beginning and helps them see themselves, not as reacting blindly to punish perceived unfairness, but as working to correct and improve injustice. In short, it promotes **Compassionate Identity**.

Development of Meaning

A few words on how children develop a sense of meaning about themselves and their worlds can shed a great deal of light on parenting strategies. So much of the exasperation that parents experience in dealing with their children rises from misunderstanding of their emotional growth and psychological development.

A rude awakening that virtually all parents experience occurs the first time we realize that we have said the very things we had sworn as kids we would never say to our own children. The guilt and disappointment got even worse as we recalled how misunderstood and devalued we felt by our own parents when they said those same things to us. How could we have done what we swore we'd never do? And why do we keep doing it?

The reason we all fall into the trap of misunderstanding our children is simple. We *think* that we communicate in words. Children know that they communicate in emotions. Adults try to fool themselves with the intellectual meaning of words, and children won't buy it. In exasperation, we fall back on the exasperated words of our parents.

This common problem rises in part because we are born with emotions, but take at least seven years to acquire any facility with language and intellectual meaning. It takes another 10-15 years before we can even begin to separate meaning from emotions. Children cannot think like adults. But adults can feel like powerless children, and usually do when they expect children to think like adults. Compassionate Parenting requires concern with the emotional response to words, which, for children, almost always departs from their intellectual meaning.

Adults do not communicate with one another primarily with words either. We just think we do, because our explanations carry off the illusion.

Emotions and Meaning

Emotions are innate **biological** responses to changes in the body or the environment. They can transform the body, most notably muscle-tone,

energy level, and facial expressions. They sensitize organs and muscle groups, accelerate or decelerate cardiovascular response, and either mute or exaggerate messages of pain and deprivation. They have the singular power to enhance, distort, or totally disrupt thinking. For instance, intense interest can make thoughts and ideas flow profusely, while utter shame makes it impossible to concentrate.

Meaning is a **psychological** classification system that allows us to make comparisons, rankings, and judgments about value: what is more desirable, helpful, beautiful, and moral. Emotion, culture, religion, historical moment, and personal history heavily influence the brain's construction of meaning.

In a frenzy of meaning making, young children begin to give meaning to their own emotions. Some are desirable, beautiful, and good, and some are not. Eventually, the meaning that children give to their emotions turn into meanings about the self. Meanings derived from family, religion, and culture follow the path of emotions into the core of the self.

As children mature, meaning becomes associated with words, but never loses its direct connection to emotions.

Components of Emotion

Temperament
Arousal (energy)
Feelings
Motivation

Temperament
Children are born with genetically programmed emotional tendencies called **temperament**, which form the biological underpinnings of personality. Subtle temperamental differences make newborns seem individual and unique even within their limited behavioral repertoire.

Temperamental differences persist throughout life but are most noticeable and most developmentally crucial in the first year. The three broad temperamental categories, which include descriptions of how the person

experiences emotions and regulates them, are **fearful-inhibited**, **easy**, and **slow to warm up.**

Easy babies are about 60% of the population. They cry to express specific needs and when those needs are met, they reorganize themselves quickly. They bond easily, favor eye contact and touch, and are generally pleasant to care for. As toddlers they are curious, adventuresome, and given to fewer temper tantrums.

Slow to warm-up babies are about 25% of the population. They have trouble with initial stimulation and need a few moments to "warm-up" to new stimulation levels. When you first touch them, they tense or recoil. But if the caregiver hangs in there, they come to like touch and affection about as much as the easy baby. As toddlers they are shy and inhibited in any new situation. But once it is familiar, they explore and socialize as much as "easy" children.

Problems occur with slow to warm up children when caregivers interpret the initial recoil from attachment behavior as rejection. Sometimes this perception is quite subtle and results in a withdrawal of compassion and attachment behavior that interferes with the child's development of self.

Fearful-inhibited infants, about 15% of the population, feel uncomfortable a lot of the time. They cry for no specific reasons. They often recoil from touch and don't easily make eye contact. They like playing and amusing interactions with parents only some of the time. But their periods of receptivity are not easily recognizable or predictable. As toddlers, they are shy, inhibited, and fearful in unfamiliar situations. Without compassion, they can develop continual feelings of self-consciousness and awkwardness.

In short, fearful-inhibited children require a lot of attention with little reward of pleasant cheerfulness. As a result, parents often feel like failures, as their infants resist the most heartfelt attempts to cheer, amuse, and give affection. Parents feel rejected, powerless, and unlovable. In self-protection they withdrawal emotionally from the child. This withdrawal of affection is where the problem lies. The child's sense of value is diminished by less positive attention. As they mature, many try to get attention in the only way that works, through negative behavior.

The following table, drawn from the work of Stella Chess and Alexander Thomas, pioneers in the clinical study of temperament, can help you assess and *appreciate* your child's temperament. The descriptions are only averages. All children vary in how they respond and all experience a range of emotions. But the same emotion, for example interest, looks quite different in a highly sociable child from its appearance in a shy, inhibited child.

Domain	Easy (sociable)	Slow to warm up	Fearful-inhibited
Activity level	Active, energetic	Takes a while to get going, but then active	Quiet
Distractibility	High interest, focus	Surface interest	Continual scanning
Persistence	Keeps trying, though in different ways if initial attempts are unsuccessful	Half-hearted initial efforts	Half-hearted subsequent efforts, quickly gives up
New situations	Curious-enthusiastic	Cautious	Anxious
Intensity	Low arousal	Moderate	High arousal
Adaptability	Easy transitions (e.g., morning to nap time)	Transitions troublesome at first	Most transitions troublesome most of the time
Regularity	Predictable in habits, e.g., sleep, emotional reactions	Somewhat predictable	Unpredictable
Sensory threshold	Likes stimulation	Highly sensitive to initial stimulation, but gradually adapts	Hypersensitive, easily over-stimulated
Mood	Mostly positive	Mixed	Mostly negative

If children receive sufficient acceptance and help to build self-regulation skill, even the most extreme temperamental conditions do not limit personal growth and development. For example, an infant born shy and inhibited will never grow up to be the life of the party. But that person can enjoy the party, contribute to other peoples' enjoyment, and feel as important and valuable as the life of the party.

Acceptance of the child's God-given temperament is absolutely crucial to maximizing the positive effects and minimizing the negative effects of emotions. First of all, personal characteristics are neither positive nor negative. Only the meanings we give to them warrant value judgments, and they are usually more negative than positive. Problem behavior almost always derives from negative meaning.

"Highly-strung" is no more a negative characteristic than "high curiosity" is a positive one. The person's skill to regulate response and do advantageous behavior is the key element in his or her life. The more a child or adult's temperament is **accepted**, the easier it is for that person to make behavior advantageous. When we say to children or adults, "Don't be shy," or, "Don't be adventuresome," or "Don't be emotionally demanding," we shame them for what they are and diminish their capacity to change behavior. Rather, asking a shy child, "What do you think the other kids in the room were thinking and feeling?" takes the focus off the child and reduces self-consciousness. The child does not see his shyness as a flaw and is free to experience interest and enjoyment in the company of other children.

Arousal

The energy that powers emotion and gives it the force to produce behavior is called arousal. Even without emotional stimulation, arousal ebbs and flows in 90-minute cycles throughout the day, even while we sleep. These arousal cycles feature a kind of reflex sexual excitation, as parents of boy infants well know.[1] At peak arousal times we are more susceptible to intense emotional response.

Excitability and abundant energy mark periods of high arousal. Abnormally high levels produce over-stimulation, obsessions, compulsions, insomnia, or mania. Periods of low arousal permit relaxation, letting go, or numbing out. Abnormally low levels create depression, muted emotions, and hypersomnia or escape into sleep.

As children mature, specific emotions sometimes attach to arousal levels. For some, high arousal produces increased anxiety (bad things will happen)

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[1] Girls have a similar cycle of sexual excitation every 90-minutes, but it is, of course, much more difficult to see.

or confidence (I can do it!). For others, low arousal produces shame (focus on failure, inadequacy, or unworthiness), pride (I know how to relax and smell the roses), anxiety (I don't have the energy to cope), or withdrawal of interest (boredom). Part II of this work offers advice on how to help children manage the arousal component of their emotions.

Feelings

Though merely one small aspect of emotions, their subjective experience—what they **feel** like—dominates our thinking about them and creates enormous misunderstanding about emotions. Trying to understand or change emotions through focus on how they feel is like seeking to understand and change intestinal gas through focus on its discomfort.

Attempts to alter the feeling component of emotion directly cause many disorders and problems of living. Foremost among these are addictions, compulsions, controlling behavior, and abuse of others. Focus on feelings makes emotional regulation virtually impossible.

Children need to know about feelings merely as one way of identifying the more important components of arousal and motivation.

Motivation

Motivation is the most important component of emotions. We cannot understand our own behavior, or that of other people, without understanding motivation. Adults as well as children cannot act in their best interests when they ignore motivation.

Each emotion carries general motivation for behavior selected from the broad categories of approach, attack, or avoid. If the event stimulating the emotion seems promising, the usual response is interest or enjoyment. These motivate various approach behaviors of "sense more, learn more, get more." If the change seems dangerous, anger, fear, or disgust emerges with motivation to attack or avoid. Compassionate Parenting converts attack and avoid motivations into benign motivations to **heal**, **correct**, and **improve**.

Types of Motivation

Growth/Empowerment	Protection
• Interest – find out more, get beneath the surface ➢ Passion – indulge, *plunge* beneath the surface ➢ Conviction – work to keep the status quo or change it ➢ **Compassion – regulate pain and negative experience of self and other** • Enjoyment – relax with, appreciate • Anxiety – learn more, increase ability to cope • Shame – change perspective and behavior; re-establish interest-enjoyment in a different way or in a different direction • Distress – get back what was lost, consolidate gains	• Fear – freeze, run • Disgust – recoil, get away from • Contempt/hatred – annihilate • Guilt – reconnect, re-establish attachment and social bonds • Anger – control, neutralize, shame, devalue, punish, warn, threaten, intimidate, avenge, attack • Inhibition – fear and shame slam on the brakes

Components of Meaning

Focus
Explanation

Focus
Focus is the mental activity that locks attention onto something to the exclusion of all other considerations. It enables problem solving and all other complex mental activities as diverse as artistic creativity, scientific investigation, heightened sensuality, and transcendental meditation.

Because focus requires high levels of energy, arousal and focus tend to go together. When they do not, the result is unpleasant. For example:

- High arousal minus focus equals restlessness;
- High arousal minus focus plus blame equals impatience or irritability;
- Low arousal minus focus equals boredom.

Focus is the most energy consuming of all brain activities. Uninterrupted concentration is rare and produces almost immediate exhaustion. (We continually take tiny breaks of enjoyment, relaxation, or distraction in most concentrated activity.) The brain treats focus as a scarce resource to be applied selectively. We can sustain high arousal and focus only with high levels of interest, such as passion, conviction, and compassion.

The importance of focus to learning, growth, and development makes a crucial skill for parents to impart to children.

Explanation
Explanations are to meaning what feelings are to emotions. Although the slowest and least accurate part of the thinking system, explanations seem to organize and dominate meaning in the way that feelings seem to organize and dominate emotions.

The similarity is not accidental. Explanations are an *extension* of the emotional system, the emotional delegate in the thinking brain. To reduce the emotional influence on explanations, the latter must be almost forcefully

co-opted by some contrived means such as scientific method or advanced meditation techniques.

Explanations aid survival in two important ways. They enhance interest, which motivates behaviors suitable to finding food, shelter, protection, and sex. They also protect us from the harmful effects of our own alarm system of fight or flight by creating an illusion of order, predictability, and safety.[2]

The servitude of explanations to emotions can be seen more clearly in minor emotional experience. A slight arousal of anxiety motivates arbitrary selection of one of a thousand possible causes, as the brain *looks* for something to worry about. When feelings are hurt, the brain *looks* for something to resent. A tremor of guilt leads us to seize one of a thousand misdemeanors as the cause. Explanations of a dull feeling of shame derive from a thousand failures. Hostility will force focus on one of a thousand offenses, and sadness, on one of a thousand losses.

Each of these emotions could have been triggered by some transient change in the self or the environment: a bit of gas or a phone ringing in an adjacent apartment. Many people feel a slight sadness when they see a bird fly. Explanations do not have to be right; they just have to navigate emotional experience, for better or worse.

The underlying emotionality and inherent arbitrariness of all explanations forces compassionate parents to resist the urge to explain emotions to children: "You feel like this because...." Rather, we help our children **label** and **describe** *motivation* – what the emotion is telling them to do – and then fit the motivation into their own short and long-term best interests, which usually requires taking the perspective of others.

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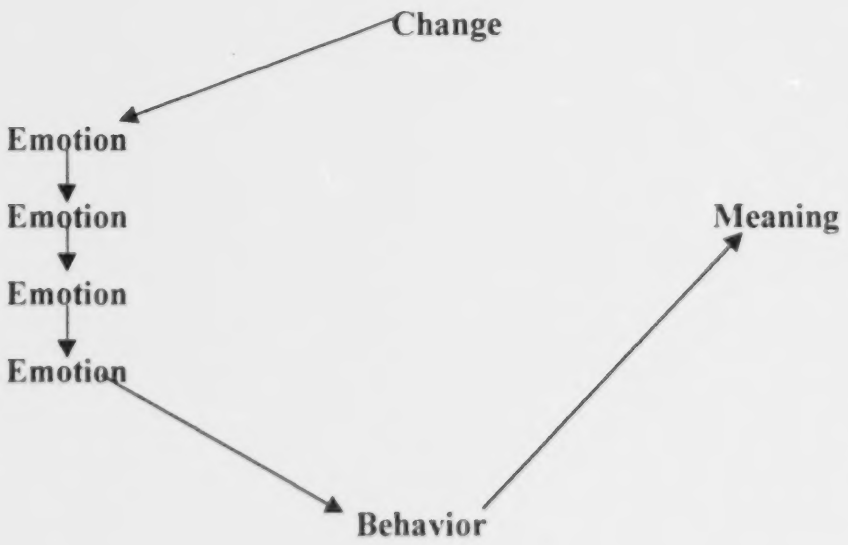
[2] The self-blame of many trauma victims restores this illusion by reducing the threat of random violence. Thus we have myths like, "If I didn't wear my skirt so short, I would not have been raped." The price of this illusion of safety is the shame of self-blame.

Emotional Habits: If it's worth doing, it's worth doing over and over and over and over and over and over...

Emotions readily form associations with each other, such that the experience of one causes the experience of others. This allows the brain to take advantage of the rapid processing of emotions to devise standard, almost generic responses to the environment. In the usual pattern, a change in the self or the environment sets off rapid chain-reactions of emotion-meaning-behavior. We find ourselves acting clearly against our best interests, almost as if a button had been pushed within us, dictating our response.

By adulthood, most of our emotional responses are habits or "scripts" that the brain follows **automatically**. Although they can be benign and efficient, like responding to criticism with renewed effort, many emotional habits limit growth, confound our best interests, and direct us against the better angels of our nature.



Compassionate Parenting helps children form growth-oriented habits of emotional response.

The Punishment Habit

The destructive habit of construing negative emotion as punishment may first emerge in toddlerhood when well-meaning but beleaguered parents try to control the behavior of the "terrible twos" by shaming children.

> "You're a bad boy."
> "I'm so disappointed in you."
> "I can't believe you're acting this way."
> "Why can't you be like your older sister?"

Of course the words are far less important than the emotional tone to a toddler with an immature sense of self, who is likely to construe any withdraw of affection as rejection. Even if parents do not overtly use shame as punishment, the connection of shame with blame is forged in the toddler's primitive thinking brain. Unable to distinguish judgments of the *self* from judgments of *behavior*, they invariably feel blamed and punished when called to account for their behavior. They respond by redirecting the blame elsewhere. My daughter, an only child, had to invent an imaginary friend when asked about her misbehavior, "No, Jimmy do it!"

Even though most significant psychological and spiritual growth in life is motivated by the experience of shame (of loss, failure, inadequacy), we view it almost exclusively as punishment. Construing negative emotion as punishment forces motivations to *reduce pain immediately* in toddler-like ways, such as blame, whining, avoidance, or denial. Instead of motivating healing, correction, and improvement, negative emotion acts as a punishing straw man from whose absurdly long shadow we feel compelled to flee like frightened children.

Focus on feelings motivates child-like, impulsive behavior to change feelings. If I feel angry, I'll punish you. If I feel unlovable, I'll eat. If I feel sad, I'll drink. If I feel powerless, I'll dominate you. If I feel anxious, I'll shop. If I feel devalued I'll devalue you. Focus on the motivational aspects of emotions, as we shall see, produces mature behavior in one's short *and* long-term best interests.

Part II
General Skills for Compassionate Parenting

Anger at Your Children: Who Has the Power?

Every parent since the beginning of time has been painfully aware that children can do a great many things to irritate, frustrate, and otherwise turn the pleasant feelings of their caretakers into moods from hell. Those same creatures that look like little darlings when they sleep can almost at their whim produce headaches, upset stomachs, jangled nerves, strained muscles, aching bones, and overloaded emotional and sensory circuits.

But there's one thing that even the most exuberant or obstinate of children cannot do: They can't make us angry. They cannot force us to give up internal regulation of our emotional experience. To understand this scientific fact that seems to fly in the face of common sense, consider the psychobiological function of anger.

Why Anger is a Problem in Families

An automatic response triggered whenever we feel threatened, anger is the most powerful of all emotional experience. The only emotion that activates every muscle group and organ of the body, anger exists to mobilize the instinctual fight or flight response meant to protect us from predators. Of course, our children are not predators. For the vast majority of problems in family life, anger constitutes overkill and under-think. Applying this survival-level fight or flight response to everyday problems of family living is like using a rock to turn off a lamp or a tank to repair a computer.

Is anyone really stupid enough to turn off a lamp with a rock? When angry, everybody is that stupid. The problem has nothing to do with intelligence, it has to do with how hurt we are. Anger is always a reaction to hurt. It can be physical pain, which is why, when you bang your thumb with a hammer while trying to hang a picture, you don't pray.

Far more often, though, anger is a reaction to psychological hurt or threat of hurt, in the form of a diminished sense of self. Vulnerability to psychological hurt depends entirely on how you feel about yourself. When your sense of self is weak or disorganized, anything can make you irritable

or angry. When it's solid and well integrated, the insults and frustrations of life just roll off your back.

For instance, if you've had a bad day, if you're feeling guilty, a little bit like a failure, or just disregarded, devalued, or irritable, you might come home to find your kid's toy in the middle of the floor and respond with: "That lazy, selfish, inconsiderate, little brat!" Yet you can come home after a great day of feeling fine about yourself, see the same toys in the middle of the floor and think, "Oh, that's just Jimmy or Sally having fun; honey pick up your toys, please," and not think twice about it.

The difference in your reaction to the child's behavior lies entirely within you and depends completely on how you feel about yourself. In the first case the child's behavior seems to diminish your sense of self: "If he cared about me, he wouldn't do this; if my own kid doesn't care about me, I must not be worth caring about." The anger is to punish the child for your diminished sense of self. In the second instance, the child's behavior does not diminish your sense of personal importance, value, power, and lovability. So there is no need for anger. You don't need a tank to solve the problem of the shoes in the middle of the floor. Rather, the problem to be solved is how to teach the child to be more considerate in his behavior; you won't do that by humiliating him because you feel humiliated. His reaction to humiliation will be the same as yours: an inability see the other person's perspective, an overwhelming urge to blame, and an impulse for revenge or punishment.

Modeling Anger Regulation for Children

Children experience anger for the same reasons as adults, mostly to defend the sense of self from pain and temporary diminishment. At the moment of anger, both children and adults feel bad about themselves. Making angry people feel worse about themselves will only make things worse. Rather, children must learn from their parents that the sense of self is internal and can be regulated only within them. They must restore their own sense of Core Value while respecting the rights of other people, which means regulating the impulse for revenge through validation of the hurt causing the urge for revenge, and through understanding the perspective of the person at whom the anger is directed. They will only learn to do this by watching their parents do it.

The Self as Parent

We all have an internal sense of "**the self as parent**" that greatly influences the meaning we give to the emotions and behavior of our children, as well as our response to them. The sheer strength of the survival-based attachment bond between parents and children lends great emotional force to its ability to enhance or undermine the sense of self as parent. If interest, compassion, trust, and love are the lush valleys of attachment identity, guilt and shame (and the anger-resentment they cause) are the hidden rocks and brambles.

The power of relationships between children and parents to cause an abundance of bad feelings about the self comes from their function as nothing less than *mirrors* of the *inner self.* We learn how valuable and worthy of love we are almost exclusively through interactions with attachment figures, especially parents and children. A distressed, angry, anxious, or misbehaving child can seem to make one feel like a failure as a parent, rejected, powerless, and thoroughly unlovable. An angry or withdrawing parent can seem to make a child feel inadequate and unworthy of compassion, trust, and love. The same emotional attunement that enables attachment relationships to build the sense of self gives them the power to tear down the core sense of self of both child and parent.

To preserve the self-building quality of this most important of relationships, compassionate parents master emotional regulation and teach it to their children. Emotional regulation establishes boundaries between the self and child. Only when we regulate our own emotions can we see those of our children as the experience of separate persons rather than a mere expression of "the self as parent." When children have the burden of regulating their parents' emotions or identity, they cannot be themselves. When we give them that burden, we lose any true sense of ourselves.

Measuring Your Sense Self as Parent

The purpose of the following scales is to help you consolidate your sense of self as parent. Don't worry if you rate yourself low right now. We repeat them at the end of the book. Then you will notice a substantial improvement.

Rate the depth and genuineness of your **Core Self as Parent**.

5-deep, solid self-esteem **4**-mild self-esteem
3-superficial or unrealistic self-esteem **2**-weakened self-esteem **1**-little self-esteem

I learn from my children	
I understand their experience of the world.	
I understand their emotional motivations.	
I understand my emotional responses to them.	
I understand my own emotional motivations.	
I enjoy my children	
I value them.	
I respect them.	
I guide them.	
I help them internalize encouragement to grow and learn.	
I help them use their awareness and intelligence for growth and development.	
I empower them.	
I teach them to regulate their emotions.	
I teach them the power of compassion.	
I model emotional intelligence.	
I teach them values	
I give them the right and confidence to solve problems in *everyone's* best interest.	
I discipline them by helping them behave in their short *and* long term best interests.	
I help them develop self-discipline.	
I give them affection.	
I express appreciation and interest, through eye contact, cuddling, cooing, soothing, and hugging.	
I model affection with other adults.	
I allow them to be themselves.	
I allow them to explore different aspects of themselves.	
I allow them to develop their fullest potential as individual human beings.	
TOTAL SCORE	

Use the following scale to rate the depth and genuineness of your self-esteem in each of the designated areas crucial to parenting.

5 - deep, solid self-esteem
4 - mild self-esteem
3 - superficial or unrealistic self-esteem
2 - weakened self-esteem
1 - little self-esteem

Depth of Self-Esteem	
Competence	
Creativity	
Growth (learning, acquiring skills, broadening, deepening appreciation)	
Healing/Nurturing (meeting physical and psychological needs of self)	
Healing/Nurturing (meeting physical/psychological needs of children)	
Respect for and value of children	
Self-Compassion (understanding, validating, and regulating deep internal experience of self)	
Compassion for loved ones (understanding and validating their deep internal experience, and supporting them for positive change)	
Empowerment of self	
Empowerment of loved ones	

Habits of Emotional Regulation

Emotions readily form associations with each other, such that the experience of one causes the experience of others. The easy habit-formation of emotional associations allows the brain to devise standard, almost generic responses to the environment. By adulthood, most of our emotional responses are habits or "scripts" that the brain follows **automatically**. Although they can be benign and efficient, like responding to criticism with renewed effort, many emotional habits limit growth, confound our best interests, and direct us against the better angels of our nature. The all too familiar result has a change in the environment setting off chain-reactions of emotion/meaning/behavior. We find ourselves acting clearly against our best interests, almost as if a button had been pushed within dictating our response.

Children learn habits of regulating emotions in large part through emotional interactions with us. In almost everything we do, we model emotional regulation for our children, for better or worse. This is yet another reason why the general emotional motivation of our actions is usually so much more important than specific behavior.

Changing Emotional Regulation Habits

Emotional Regulation (ER) isn't anything novel or even uncommon. The only new thing about it is a scientifically developed technology to optimize what people have done throughout the millennia. For instance, the most common formal method of ER since the beginning of human history has been prayer. We acknowledge our vulnerabilities to God or a higher power and ask for the internal strength to change the motivation of our emotions from anti-social and self-destructive to pro-social and growth producing. The only difference with HEALS (our ER technique), is that concerted repetition *associated* with anger or anxiety arousal (present or recalled from the past) **habituates** the response and makes it **automatic**. Both prayer and HEALS work alone. Together they're awesome.

The habit-forming tendency of emotions dictates that enduring change in emotional response cannot rely on slower and more complex conscious attention. Rather, it is necessary to habituate new emotional response

attached to the old. For instance, anger is the nearly universal response to diminishment of the self, feeling put down, controlled, manipulated, etc. Instead of changing the habitual sequence of *diminishment-anger*, E-R extends the sequence by associating self-compassion and compassion for others with the anger. With repetition, the sequence extension becomes *diminishment-anger-self-compassion-compassion for other*. Once habituated, the emotional system's incredible speed of processing can handle this sequence extension–this new habit–in fractions of a second.

The Most Important Concepts of ER: Value and Core Value

- Value is the importance and significance we give to persons and things.

- The need to value is universal in human beings; people from all cultures seek multiple levels of value in their lives.

- Value gives our lives meaning and purpose and fills us with strength, courage, spirit, and morale. Living with little value is empty, dull, and uncreative. Living with high value gives us the ability to sense beauty, behave morally, and to love.

- The following are a few of the persons and things that most people value:
  - children
  - parents
  - intimates
  - friends
  - special teachers
  - fairness and honesty
  - goals
  - certain behaviors and activities
  - certain beliefs
  - a lifestyle (clothes, food, recreation, music)
  - nature
  - art
  - some notion of God.

The Laws of Value

I. The more value we give to a person or thing, the more interest and meaning we have in our lives.

II. We are each in charge of how we invest value.

Core Value

- Core Value is the human capacity to **create** value. All the value we create in life comes from Core Value.

- Core Value is always *far more* than the mere sum of values. It includes the **value of *you***, the psychological equivalent of the human soul. At its deepest and most profound, it helps you value God or Nature or the Universe.

- Core Value is a psychological state, a place deep within yourself where you know your own humanity, your capacity to value yourself *while* valuing others.

- The greater your Core Value the more depth to your value of self and others. The more depth to your value of self and others, the greater your Core Value.

- A clear awareness that no problem, behavior, or event can reduce your value as a person, Core Value tells you that you're *okay*, even if certain behavior may need to change. You have the strength to change perspectives and any behavior not in your best interests.

- Core Value has two psychological functions:

    - Stop negative emotions, with their built-in motivation to devalue the self or others.
    - Convert the negative to positive, with motivation to value the self and others.

- Although it can seem temporarily diminished, Core Value is *invincible* to damage from the outside world. The world can hurt your feelings and body but *never* your Core Value.

- **When in touch with Core Value, you cannot do wrong.**

- We can access Core Value in the midst of negative emotion through the sheer ***will*** to activate it, the will to feel humane, to value the self and others.

- There are many ways to access Core Value. You can begin by saying, "I want to value my own positive emotions and I want to value other people."

Examples:

If the negative emotion is quiet, sadness, loneliness, or disappointment, the experience of Core Value might be quiet or peaceful.

For intense negative emotion, like anger, anxiety, or distress:

- Identify the hurt causing you to *de*value yourself or others.

- Say, "I want to value my own positive emotions and I want to value other people."

- Core Value can begin like a rush, a thousand specks of warm light surging through your body.

- The light of Core Value outshines the shadows of pain, replacing it with well being, soothing, comfort, euphoria, excitement, or elation, a state of grace. You have strong motivation to **heal**, **correct**, and **improve**.

Statement of Core Value

I am worthy of respect, value, and compassion, whether or not I get them from others. If I don't get them from others, it is necessary to feel <u>more</u> worthy, not <u>less</u>. It is necessary to affirm my own deep value as a unique person (a child of God). I respect and value myself. I have compassion for my hurt. I have compassion for the hurt of others. I trust myself to act in my best interests and in the best interests of loved ones.

Find Your Core Value Image

Core Value is so deep and early an experience that it cannot be fully expressed in words. Rather, internal **images** activate Core Value.

The primary image of Core Value is a deep, bright, warm, light. Other images can seem realistic, like an accelerated sunrise piercing the dark night and beautifully illuminating the world. Or they can seem abstract, like shimmering colors in swirling patterns. They can have sound, like birds chirping at dawn. They can have motion, like a sense of movement through color and space. They can have warmth and light or seem cool and dim. They can excite you or calm you, relax or focus you. Your Core Value images *must* come from deep inside you and produce soothing, comfort, and morale or excitement and elation.

Examples of Core Value Images:

- **ocean waves, heat of sun**
- **birds chirping at dawn**
- **solid marble with "important, valuable, worthy, equal" written on it**

Reconnect to Core Value at Least 12 Times Per Day

The ultimate goal is to stay connected to Core Value all the time. In the beginning, you will need to remember to invoke Core Value. Have certain places that automatically remind you. The bedroom and car are good places

to start. Whenever you go into your bedroom, whenever you get into the car, connect to your Core Value, your undeniable source of morale and the spirit to go on.

It is important to connect to Core Value when you do not really need to, so it will become easier to make connection when you most *need* it.

Core Hurts: The Cause of Anger, Anxiety, Resentment, Obsessions, Bad Behavior

When disconnected from Core Value we suffer core hurts. Core Value is the truth about the self. Core hurts are lies we come to believe about ourselves. Core value motivates behavior that promotes growth and development; core hurts motivate behavior harmful to the self or others. Core hurts separate us from Core Value.

Core Hurts

disregarded
unimportant
accused/guilty
devalued/disrespected
rejected
powerless
inadequate, unlovable

*H*EALS: Regulating Core Hurts to Access Core Value

Goal of Practicing *H*EALS:

Build a ***Skill*** the Brain Uses ***Automatically***
(in a ***fraction*** of a second) to Reach
Core Value when Aroused with
Anger, Anxiety, or Obsessions

To practice HEALS, you must:

- recall a time in the past when you felt disregarded, ignored, accused, guilty, devalued, disrespected, lied to, or betrayed;
- imagine it in enough detail to get the physiological arousal the event provoked to about five to ten percent of its actual level;
- begin the steps of the regulation.

Practice *H*EALS at least *12* times per *day*, recalling a time when you felt disregarded, ignored, accused, guilty, devalued or disrespected, lied to or betrayed.

It takes an average of **six weeks** of **12 repetitions per day,** ***associated*** with *imagined* or *recalled* **anger** or **anxiety** arousal, for the skill to become ***automatic***.

How and Where to Practice *H*EALS

Practice on mild arousal incidents at first, then work up to the hard ones. With increasing repetitions, you develop the skill to regulate more intense arousal.

Carry your copy of the steps of *H*EALS everywhere you go.

One good place to practice *H*EALS is in front of the mirror. Observe your eyes, the color and muscle tone in your face.

Another good place to practice is in the car. Many people put the steps of *H*EALS on a small card and keep a copy in their visor.

Practice while waiting in line or in a waiting room.

There are no bad times or places in which to practice ***H*EALS**.

Steps of *H*EALS

HEALS has five steps, three within yourself and two outside yourself.

1. ***"HEALS"* flashes and sounds 3-4 times in your imagination**
2. **Explain to yourself the deepest core hurt**
3. **Access your Core Value**
4. **Love yourself by acknowledging your humanity: compassion**
5. **Solve the problem**

It is crucial that we practice *H*EALS when at least a little bit aroused with one of the dozens of forms of anger.

To practice HEALS, recall a time when someone: **ignored** you, **disregarded** you, **pressured, manipulated,** or **tried to control** you. Or think of when someone **disrespected** you, **made fun** of you, **threatened** you, **lied** to you, or **betrayed** you.

Take a few seconds to imagine the scene as vividly as you can. Think of what you felt like. Pretend that it's happening now. Feel the feelings. It's happening now…

FEEL it tense in your:
neck
jaw
eyes
shoulders
chest
hands.

It's happening *now*!

It isn't fair!
Here we go again!
It'll never stop!
They always do this!
I can't stand it!

Push yourself to <u>feel</u> revenge impulse. **They can't do this to me!**

Now "**HEALS**" flash in your imagination. Feel yourself relax.
HEALS...HEALS...HEALS....

Explain to yourself the <u>deepest</u> of the core hurts <u>causing</u> the anger.

"I am powerless, I am unlovable."

Have the **courage** to deeply feel, for just a second, what it's like to **<u>be</u>** that core hurt.
Feel what it's like to be completely powerless and unworthy.
"I'm a puppet on a string. They control everything I think, feel, and do."
"No one could ever pay attention to my opinions or feelings. No one could love the ***real*** me."

Now have the greater courage to go deeper. Access your **Core Value**. Go deeply enough to feel your humanity, your gift from God. You have the ***power*** to act in your best interest regardless of what anyone else does. You are ***valuable, lovable,*** and ***equal to everyone on earth.***

Feel your deepest image of Core Value.

"I'm okay, even if behavior needs to change."

Feel your Core Value grow.

"I'm powerful enough to change my thoughts, feelings, and behavior."

Now **love yourself.** Prove, beyond a doubt, how **powerful** and **worthy** you are; feel **compassion** for the person who offended you. Feel sympathy, <u>not</u> for the behavior, but for the **core hurt** that caused it. You know how bad the core hurt feels, you just felt it. Recognize their Core Value, and yours will soar. Then they might find the strength to change bad behavior.

Now solve the problem in your best interest. Will you solve it better with anger, anxiety, resentment, depression, aggression, drinking, drugging, avoiding, or with compassion? Which do you prefer? Which feels more powerful, symptoms and defenses, or compassion?

Each time you practice HEALS, you gain a little more of your inner self. You become wiser, more powerful, and better able to understand yourself and others.

Directions for feeling the identified core hurt in the "Explain to Yourself" step of *H*EALS

Note: Always go to the deepest of the core hurts. *H*EALS may not work if you do not go low enough. If feeling rejected and you identify feeling

"unimportant," your response will not reach deeply enough. However, *H*EALS will work if you go "too low." If feeling unimportant, and you identify "unlovable," regulation will still occur.

Disregarded: Feel what it's like to feel unworthy of regard, not to count enough for anyone to pay attention to your opinions, desires, and feelings.

Unimportant: Feel what it's like to be totally unimportant, not to matter at all, to be so unimportant that no one should consider having a passing positive thought about you.

Accused/Guilty: Feel what it is like to have done something wrong, to have hurt someone, to have done terrible damage, to have betrayed someone, to have been immoral. **Accused/Untrustworthy**: Feel what it's like to be unworthy of trust. No one can or should trust you. You are incapable of being trusted.

Accused/Distrusted: Feel what it's like to be accused and distrusted. No matter how well you do, how innocent you are, how moral you are, you will not be trusted.

Devalued: Feel what it's like to be totally without value as a person. You are worthless.

Rejected: Feel what it's like to be completely unacceptable, to be banished, put down, thrown out, and abandoned.

Powerless: Feel what it's like to be completely without power over your internal experience, to be out of control of your thoughts, your feelings, and your behavior. You're like a puppet on a string or a robot whose buttons anyone can push. Anybody can make you think, feel, and do anything they want.

Unlovable: Feel what it's like to be unworthy of love. No one could love you. No one could love the real you. No one ever will.

Each of these feelings brings intense discomfort. The healing of self-compassion must quickly relieve them. With the application of self-

compassion, you deeply understand that the behavior of another person or the occurrence of any event outside you can have no valid meaning about the self. You are worthy of regard, important, above accusation, valuable, acceptable, powerful, and lovable. Your compassion for others will prove it to you.

Trouble with *H*EALS

1. Go deeper on the core hurt list. Don't be afraid to feel "unfit for human contact," even if it seems worse than the core hurt you actually felt. The worse the core hurt the easier it becomes to reactivate Core Value.

2. Try to get as close as you can to feeling the deepest core hurt for one second.

3. If you have trouble making the transition to applying self-compassion or accessing Core Value, try rapid eye movement for a few seconds. Focus your eyes on your finger and move it rapidly back and forth a few seconds.

4. In the "Apply self-compassion" step, deeply appreciate that, no matter what the trigger incident, you do not deserve to continue feeling core hurts. Continuing to feel core hurts impedes your ability to make things better.

5. In the "Love yourself" step, recognize the Core Value of the person who offended you. He/she is far more complicated, complex, and humane than what they did to you. By realizing their complexity and humanity, you reinforce your own.

6. In the "Love yourself" step, identify the other person's core hurt that caused the behavior you don't like. (It will almost always be the same one you felt.) Feel compassion, not for the behavior, but for the hurt. Compassion for the hurt focuses on the cause and points out that the behavior cannot be supported if it makes the core hurt worse. Your compassion will activate self-compassion of the other almost as quickly as your anger will escalate anger in the other.

General Skills of Compassionate Parenting

First, let's repeat the caveat that this work concerns the **emotional development** of children and parents. It is assumed that parents will meet all physical needs of their children with good nutrition and health care, including regular visits to the pediatrician.

For All Ages

- Teach them Core Value.
- Help them invoke their Core Value when distressed, pained, or challenged.
- Listen to your children. Research shows that children in all stages of development complain that their parents yell too much and listen too little.
- As much as possible, let solutions to problems come from the children. As they mature, your job is less and less to give answers and more and more to ask the questions that lead them to solutions.
- Choose toys that have something beneath the surface to help deepen their interest. Young children cannot sustain interest for long, but they can develop a beginning awareness that interest works better when it runs deeper than the surface.
- Understand that change stimulates emotion. You and your children will have emotional response to change, regardless of the content.
- We must take care in all stages of life to respond to *positive* emotions as well as negative, less we set up the habit of using trouble to get attention. Compassionate attention to expressions of interest and enjoyment are opportunities to develop positive emotional response in children and adults.
- Express affection to your children and to other adults in the family.

The Law of *Emotional Investment*: Using Emotions Intelligently

Streams of interest and enjoyment, unless disorganized by shame, distress, or fear, stop only in exhaustion. The intelligent part comes in directing interest/enjoyment streams into areas that produce the greatest growth and development.

Although goal achievement cannot occur without it, emotional investment is not goal-directed in terms of outcome. **Emotional investment is its own reward**, *regardless* of the outcome. When true emotional investment occurs in a task that has a negative outcome, like a rejected request, the emotional investment proves nonetheless successful in providing purpose and invaluable information, both in terms of basic skills and for achieving similar goals in the future. Of course, this fact of nature is obscured by overemphasis on outcome, which only serves to weaken the emotional investment and produce poorer outcomes. Consequently, we must **praise the investment of interest** and, later, the **concentration of our children,** rather than **outcome.**

The most desired outcome is, of course, good feeling. But this simple desire creates havoc in meeting challenges and solving problems. Solving problems just to feel better always produces poor solutions, such as blind alley pursuits, blaming, whining, denying, and avoiding. Feeling better occurs as a by-product of the *first step* in performing a task or solving the problem.

Even when it produces favorable outcome, regarding positive emotion as reward leads to emptiness and ultimate failure. Children who seek the "reward" of enjoyment in reading not only fail to learn, but soon give up trying. Those who understand that interest requires novelty and that novelty depends on what they ***choose*** to **notice**, feel the power of **investing** their interest in the most profitable behaviors. Those children learn with high efficiency.

Interest Investment

Interest **focuses attention** on something we want to do or keep doing. To sustain interest there must be a promise of understanding, of stimulating a natural depth perception that drives us to learn more about the interesting

thing. Focus of attention is pleasurable with high interest. With little or no interest, we have to force ourselves to focus with ever-greater expenditures of energy.

Successful people choose where to **invest** their interest for optimal growth and development. They create their own interest in tasks they need to do, whether or not they are inherently interesting. Less successful people focus attention for some reward or avoidance of loss that adheres to the task. Most unsuccessful people do tasks by habit and rely on change in the environment to stimulate interest. This makes them highly susceptible to competing interests that do not facilitate growth and development. All unsuccessful people have large blocks to interest originating in anxiety or shame.

Anxiety dilutes interest by forcing the brain to scan rather than focus. The unknown element that stimulates fear forces the brain to scan the surface of all possibilities, lest one bring disaster unexpectedly. Anxious people cannot commit to sustained or deepened interest due to fear of a mistake or fear that the commitment will impair their ability to react quickly enough to threats from other directions or to more rewarding sources of interest that may emerge.

Shame blocks interest by stopping it dead in its tracks with shadows of failure or rejection that make focus of attention impossible. Competing interest draws attention to something perceived to be better.

Guiding Interest Investment

Most problems of parents and children between six and 18 come from struggles over investment of interest. Compassionate parents view a child's failure to comply with parental limits and guidelines as an opportunity for deeper empowerment and relationship improvement.

Most of the time shame or fear of failure blocks investment of interest. A dead give away occurs when children are not very interested in competing activities. Shame inhibited children seem chronically bored. Increasing shame for not being interested cannot help. Nor can Pollyannaish encouragement like, "You can do it," or, "Just take a positive attitude."

Take Interest beneath the Surface

Compassionate parents empower children with the understanding that interest makes the world come alive and gives multiple dimensions to an otherwise flat and dull existence. Interest is their most precious resource that they need to invest wisely.

Some children need help to increase the natural motivation of interest: to find out more. Parents must ask them questions that go beneath the surface. Three examples follow. The first helps children find interest in manipulating numbers.

Example One:. Write the numbers:

123

Ask the child to see what other numbers he/she can make of them.

321
213
132
312
231

Ask the child to add each combination. Then subtract them. Then multiply them.

Example Two: Ask younger children to come up with new colors by mixing crayon colors.

Example Three: Parent: "It's hard to get interested in your homework, isn't it?"

Child: "You got that right."

Parent: "But what would it be like if you were interested?"

Child: "Then I'd want to do it."

Parent: "What would that be like? Would you want to find out more about it?"

Child: "I guess so."

Parent: "Try doing right now what you would do if you wanted to find out more about your geography."

Child: "I'd care about how many minerals come out of Venezuela."

Parent: "The trick about interest is that you don't have to care how many minerals come out of Venezuela. All you have to care about is learning. Care about how your brain works when it gains knowledge. New things create interest. Read this page of your homework and count all the new things you learn."

Reducing Shame Barriers to Interest

Parent: "I know you're bored, and I know how terrible that feels. But there's only one thing that takes away boredom. What does boredom tell you to do?"

Child: "Give up."

Parent: "Will that make things more or less boring?"

Child: "Invest interest."

Parent: "And how do you do that?"

Child: "Find something new to learn."

For many children, shame about failure or inadequacy blocks interest. These are the most chronically bored and the ones most apt to engage in high-risk behaviors that carry superficial excitement to energize them. They must reconnect to their Core Value, the source of their ability to invest interest and value to optimal long-term advantage.

For many more children, low interest investment derives from an inability to filter out distractions stimulated by anxiety. Reducing anxiety consists of:

- Learning more (the unknown raises anxiety)
- Increasing skill, which provides confidence in one's ability to cope.

Sometimes cooperation interferes with competing investments of interest and enjoyment. Children would rather play baseball than do homework. Competing interests present an opportunity to teach children to balance preferences with responsibilities. They feel empowered when they learn that they can control their growth and development by choosing where to invest their interest. "My Best Interests" provides an effective means of communicating the enormous power of interest.

My Best Interests

Behaving in my "best interests" means doing what will most likely prove best for me. Behaving in my **short-term** best interests means doing what I prefer to do right now.

My long-term best interests are met by doing whatever helps me:

- Grow and stay healthy;
- Do things I'm **proud** of;
- Do whatever I do better than the last time I did it.

How do I prefer to invest my interest and enjoyment right now?

- Playing outside
- Cooperating (doing chores and other things expected of me)
- Watching TV
- Learning about myself and my emotions
- Doing homework
- Playing computer games
- Learning about other people and their emotions
- Other _____

Three Questions of Power and Emotional Intelligence

Is it in my long-term best interest to do my preference right now or later?

How much time do I need to spend on my long-term best interest right now in order to get my preference later?

If I do my preference right now, how much time will I need to spend on my long-term best interest later?

Checklist to Identify Your Motivation in Interactions with Your Children

Positive **Approach** (interest or enjoyment)	**Negative** **Avoid** (interest elsewhere)	**Destructive** **Attack** (anger/aggression)
__ **Connect** __ **Protect** __ **Nurture** __ **Encourage** __ **Influence/Guide** __ **Set limits** __ **Negotiate/Cooperate** __ **Request behavior change**	__ **Ignore** __ **Manipulate** __ **Control** __ **Withdraw**	__ **Criticize** __ **Reject** __ **Demand** __ **Coerce** __ **Dominate** __ **Threaten** __ **Abuse** (verbal or physical)

Is this motivation in your long-term best interests *and* that of the child? If not, reconnect to Core Value and change the motivation.

Does the child believe that your motivation is positive? If not, reconnect to Core Value and try again.

Teaching Compassion

Attempts to help children develop the compassionate aspects of their nature fail if they invoke guilt instead. Children who associate bad feelings about themselves with the feelings of others will view the vulnerable emotions of others as punitive or manipulative and respond with negative or destructive behavior.

The information that invokes compassion must center on the deeper emotional experience of others, not on how bad the child is for causing that experience or for failing to notice it. As always, we keep the focus on motivation. We do not say, "You hurt me!" or even, "I felt hurt when you

did that." Instead we say, "Do you want me to feel hurt?" If a hurt or angry child responds, "Yes!" We ask, "Why?" This leads to the child's true motivation: his/her own core hurt.

Emotional Vocabulary

The ability to label emotional states is a necessary step in the efficient regulation of them. Research shows that children stop having temper tantrums when they develop an emotional vocabulary to express and discriminate among differing emotional states.

The human brain is a labeling machine. It must name things to process, store, and recall information with efficiency. To appreciate this rudimentary aspect of brain functioning, try thinking of three things, or better, acquaintances, without thinking of their names. Recall the anxiety you feel when you see a thing or a person and can't remember the name. Some people can't sleep until they recall the name, even if they will never again see the thing or person.

The same form of processing by label occurs with emotional experience. We must be able to label differing emotional states to discriminate one from the other. If we cannot tell disappointment from sadness from rejection from powerlessness from failure from unworthiness, the brain tends to associate the experience of one with all of them in a cycle of increasing emotionality. The resulting overload of emotions tends to funnel into the strongest emotional response: anger and temper tantrums.

The single most important emotional word for children to learn is "disappointed," since most of their negative emotional experience is triggered by disappointment. When they can say, "I feel disappointed," they can stop the cascade of negative associations and begin to have power over their emotions. The Appendix of this book demonstrates how to teach emotional vocabulary to small children.

At all stages of development, children are far more prone to disappointment than adults, due to their higher levels of interest and excitement. They have not yet learned how disappointing life can seem. We adults have learned to attenuate the fall of frequent disappointment by limiting the rise of interest.

Worse for children, their sleight emotional vocabulary curtails their ability to discriminate between disappointment and rejection. An excited child who does not get what he or she wants is likely to feel rejected. Compassionate Parenting does not, most of the time, give the child what he or she wants. More often it supports the child in regulating naturally disappointment without losing enthusiasm.

Mistakes and Learning

The human brain is a trial-and-error organism programmed to learn from mistakes. Distances are accurately judged by the accumulative corrections of mistaken estimates. Adults learn good judgment, not, alas, from their parents' mistakes, but from their own youthful indiscretions. Toddlers cannot learn to walk except by falling. In fact, parents who have a low tolerance of their toddlers falling and try excessively to help them balance their weight, can interfere with the skeletal-muscular development of the child.

The paradigm for human learning can be seen in pitching horseshoes. Unless blind luck intervenes, the first attempt to pitch a horseshoe either goes too long or too short of the mark. The second attempt overcompensates in the opposite direction. The third attempt has the best chance of making the ringer. Our brains do not see this sequence as three separate attempts with two failures and one success. It sees them as one successful attempt with two learning steps.

Compassionate parents embrace mistakes as useful learning opportunities. Repeated mistakes strongly indicate that a new approach to the problem or a new perspective is necessary.

Accidents, Anxiety, Visualization

Of course, children experience many more accidents than adults. The vast majority of these do not involve safety considerations, since safety is primarily the responsibility of the parent. Most of the troublesome accidents of children endanger property, such as spills, breakage, and damage to clothes and furniture. The numerous accidents of children owe to their frequent growth spurts that disrupt eye-hand coordination and to their higher

levels of excitement and distractibility. The accidents a child experiences do not predict accident-proneness or carelessness as an adult. **Yelling or shaming children for accidents will actually produce more of them.** Besides focusing on what you don't want them to do, yelling or shaming for mistakes raises the anxiety level around activities that require extra coordination. Anxiety makes it very difficult for children to concentrate. They, like us, tend to deal with anxiety by distraction. In other words, making them anxious will make them pay less attention, not more.

Much of human task performance is visualized before enacted. We run it through in our heads very rapidly before we do it. Punishing children for mistakes helps them visualize the wrong way to do it. Parents yelling things like, "You're going to drop that glass!" or, "I told you to be careful!" raise anxiety and encourage children to visualize the glass falling. Always help them visualize the right way to do things. "Honey, please hold the glass with two hands," has a much better chance of working. But again, the specifics of what you say are less important than the general motivation. Motivations to encourage and influence work better than motivations to control, criticize, reject, demand, or threaten.

Reducing the Exotic

Most children, as well as adults, gravitate toward the exotic. Many behavior problems rise from children's natural curiosity about new things. Parents inadvertently make certain objects even more exotic by harsh warnings to stay away from them, creating the "forbidden fruit" syndrome.

Allow children to handle breakable and valuable objects gently, in a seated position, with close supervision. Nothing in the house should be absolutely forbidden to the child, as long as they receive supervision to ensure safe contact. This strategy not only reduces the allure of the exotic, it teaches children to handle valued objects with care.

Home Play Therapy

Home Play Therapy offers a structure to maximize interest in children. It creates a daily time for parents to invest undivided interest in their children. Concerned with teaching their children right from wrong, parents sometimes inadvertently communicate a sense of failure and rejection (or at least conditional acceptance) to their children. Structured play therapy counteracts this flow of negative messages.

Set aside 10 to 15 minutes each day, on a regularly scheduled basis, to play unconditionally with your child. This communicates a sense of acceptance and helps the child develop a positive self-image.

During this time, parents should concentrate on nothing but enjoying the child.

Put a check next to those elements you have included in each play session. (The logs are repeated on the next page for copying.)

1. Allow the child to choose the activity, whether a toy, a game, book, a walk, or just sitting on your lap. (Asking the child to tell you a story is a good activity, but only if the child is enthusiastic about the idea.)	
2. Make no attempt to correct, direct, or teach. Play with your child as if you were a peer. (In the case of a story, you can ask questions to coax out detail, but don't correct or edit the story; it must come from within the child.)	
3. Encourage the child to express anything that is on his or her mind.	
4. Make a mental note of things you learn about the child in the play.	
5. At the end of the playtime, tell your child that you appreciated this quality time together.	
6. Write down the things you noticed about your child, such as a joyful expression with a doll, or an aggressive expression with a toy.	

Post Play Therapy Log

1. What activity did the child choose?
2. What did I learn about my child in this session?

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Effective Discipline

Like all human beings, children need discipline to help them function at their best. Believe it or not, they actually *want* us to discipline them. Children from homes in which there is little discipline tend to feel unloved, isolated, and unprotected. Many adolescents from undisciplined homes lie to their peers and make up curfews that they attribute to neglectful parents.

Children view it as the job of parents to set the limits and as their job to test them. Compassionate parents set firm limits about important issues of safety, health, learning, education, and morality and encourage cooperation with the rest of life's rules and limitations.

Many discipline problems rise from some physical discomfort, such as hunger or sleep deprivation. Take care to meet the child's physical needs as well as your own before attempting discipline. *Emotional* discomfort caused by nervous energy, anxiety, and disappointment accounts for most other discipline problems. Of course, discipline that increases anxiety, such as yelling or shaming, makes emotional discomfort worse and produces more undesired behavior in the long run.

General Rules of Effective Discipline

- Discipline is a long-term project. It is never just for a single behavior. The purpose of discipline is to give general direction for a stream of behaviors over time.

- Discipline **must** be implemented with **positive parental motivation** to **protect, nurture, encourage, influence, guide, set limits,** or **cooperate.**

- Stress safety, health, learning, education, and morality as *pride* and *empowerment*.

- Help children think through how their long-term best interests are served by cooperation.

- Focus on what you want, not what you don't want. "Put your feet on the floor," works better than "Don't put your feet on the sofa." Behavior tends to follow attention, as we should have learned from the forbidden fruit saga of Genesis.

- Keep the focus on the behavior, not your emotional state. Never discipline in anger.

- Ask questions whenever possible to help children come up with their own motivation to cooperate. The regulation for behavior must be established in the child, not in you as policeman.

- Help children understand that their behavior is a choice. They always have the *power* to choose better behavior.

- Help children think through the consequences of their behavior choices, especially the response that their behavior invokes in other people.

- Fit the discipline to the temperament of the child. Discipline that works well for an outgoing, high-energy child can be damaging to a sensitive, inward child.

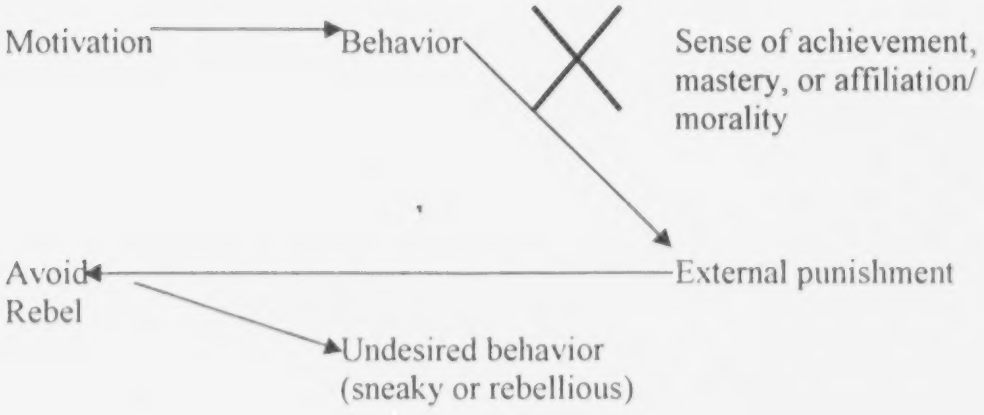
Reward/Punishment vs. Natural Self-Enhancement

Most people apply a terribly superficial form of discipline to themselves and their children, based on conditioned responses of reward and punishment. For example, "If you do this you'll get a reward, like praise, a cookie, a toy, or a hug. If you don't do it you'll get punished with something like a dirty look, shouting, a time out, a spanking, etc. Unfortunately, this common form of discipline undermines the natural enhancement of the sense of self that comes from achievement or mastery and through affiliation with others.

Natural Self-Enhancement

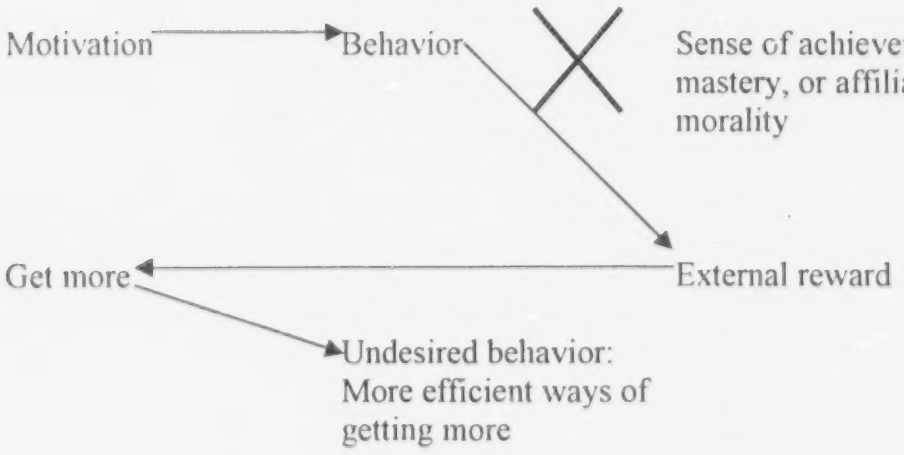
Ineffective discipline replaces natural self-enhancement with an artificial schedule of rewards and punishments.

Punishment



Punishment motivates passive-aggressiveness, sneakiness, low self-esteem or depression on the one hand or defiance and rebellion on the other. Punishment focuses the child's attention on what you don't want them to do.

Reward



Without the natural self-enhancement of achievement, mastery, or affiliation, rewards are momentary and never satisfying. Children become conditioned to seek constant streams of external rewards with necessarily diminishing returns. Perhaps worse, they do things to get rewards that have little or nothing to do with the behavior that earns them. With exclusively extrinsic reward, it is difficult to generate interest in the behavior, which greatly lowers performance efficiency. With no value given to the behavior itself, most of it becomes tiresome and boring. Since the reward is all they really want anyway, children, like many adults, come to resent having to do tasks to get it. They concoct sneaky methods of cutting corners or getting what they want in other ways. To prevent completely shabby behavior, parents must serve as full-time policemen enforcing the laws of punishment and reward.

The effects of discipline that disrupt natural self-enhancement are easily exploited by undesirable means. Most of the chagrinned attention that TV and computer games inspire centers on the modeling of violent and immoral behavior. But the evidence is inconclusive as to whether electronic saturation motivates some children to anti-social behavior. Far more insidious may be the effect of distorting motivation, which, at best, suppresses achievement and renders real life boring. At worst it creates a "feel good" culture in which feelings are separated from achievement and accomplishment, making us susceptible to drugs and other quick fixes.

Discipline and Identity

Methods of discipline contribute greatly to the emerging identity of children, which, in turn, greatly influences how they see themselves in relation to the world. When their identity forms around reward, what matters is not who they are, but what they have and what they can get from others. When their identity forms around punishment, the most important thing about them becomes what others have done to them and how they might get even. Compassionate Parenting directs identity toward achievement, mastery, and affiliation.

Discipline as Conditioned Response

For discipline to have any effect in guiding good behavior or preventing bad behavior, enhancement or inhibition must become associated with motivation. The human brain accomplishes this through enhancing or inhibiting emotion.

Enhancing emotions reinforce meaning and make behavior more decisive, though not always advantageous. They increase energy and focus. They reduce doubt and strengthen resolve. They make us certain, even if wrong. They strengthen morale and the "spirit to go on." The major enhancing emotions–interest, excitement, and anger–fortify prevailing meaning and behavior: "I'm right, this is really good or really bad."

Some emotions act as **inhibitors** of others, such that the experience of one *blocks* the experience of another. I would be ecstatic about winning the lottery, were it not for the distress caused by the death of a loved one. Shame and fear are the most potent and universal emotional inhibitors. I cannot experience love if it smacks of the probability of rejection or of my failure to sustain it. I cannot experience sufficient interest to achieve my fullest potential if I sense the shame of failure or the risk of harm, deprivation, or isolation. Inhibition slams on the central nervous system brakes, freezing behavioral motivation in its tracks, in the expectation that something bad (dangerous or humiliating) will happen. The major variations on this theme go like this:

- Inhibited people think something bad will happen.
- Cautious people think something bad *might* happen.
- Impulsive people can't imagine what will happen.
- Compulsive people think something bad will happen, but want to beat the odds.
- Enthusiastic people think something good will happen.

Traditional discipline attempts to make children, the most impulsive of God's creatures, cautiously enthusiastic. It fails, due to its heavy reliance on inhibitory shame and fear.

"You're going to get hurt!
"It's dangerous to be out by yourself!
"Good girls don't do that.
"Don't be a cry baby.
"You're a bad boy!"

Shame is a bad feeling about the self; fear is a paralyzing experience of the world as dangerous. They tend to rob children of initiative and erode self-esteem on the one hand or make them rebellious and contrary on the other. Traditional discipline cannot produce emotionally intelligent children who automatically think of what they can do to make the best things happen. Parental manipulation of a child's shame and fear garners short-term compliance by disempowering the child.

Fear and shame disempower motivation with global doubt and uncertainty. They deplete energy and concentration, and diminish confidence, morale, and resolve. They make it impossible to think straight and to take decisive action. *That is their purpose.* They abruptly disorganize meaning and behavior *before* things get worse.

Once again, it is not what parents say or do that makes the difference, it is the emotional motivation of what they say and do to which children respond. The use of shame and fear to inhibit undesired behavior is effective if parental motivation is approach and encourage. For example, "Wait a minute, let's figure this out so you won't make a mistake," or, "Stop! How can you make sure you can cross the street safely?" This helps the child re-empower the temporarily disempowered self through redirected interest that leads to achievement, mastery, and affiliation.

Children, like adults, *must* re-empower themselves immediately following the experience of fear or shame. Our brains will not allow us to remain for long in states of powerlessness. Even if we lack social power, as children do, we re-empower in covert ways. When parents pull power trips on their children and say something like, "As long as you're under my roof you will do what I say," they mumble under their breath: "You old fart. I can' wait to grow up and move out!"

The choices for re-empowerment are positive (growth producing and pro-social) or negative: self-destructive and anti-social. Positive empowerment restores natural self-enhancement described above.

Motivation → Behavior → Sense of achievement, mastery, or affiliation/ morality

Growth producing empowerment emphasizes self-enhancement through interest-motivated learning, understanding, and appreciation. Pro-social empowerment re-establishes attachment and social bonds, through renewed interest, compassion, trust, and love. Positive empowerment produces personal qualities such as a high moral sense, courage, conviction, compassion, initiative, and passion.

Negative empowerment emphasizes motivation to avoid and deny or to punish, put down, avenge, and humiliate the self and/or others. It produces personal qualities such as rebelliousness, sneakiness, and untrustworthiness.

The generic interventions of Compassionate Parenting are to:

- Guide the child's motivation to produce an internal sense of self-enhancement through achievement, mastery, or affiliation;
- Redirect the child's motivation to produce natural self-enhancement;
- Disrupt the child's motivation to reestablish natural self-enhancement;
- Associate natural self-enhancement with the child's negative motivation.

Behavior and Its Consequences

It is necessary, of course, to teach children that their behavior has consequences that must be considered whenever they choose that behavior in the future. Life cannot succeed on any level when individuals consistently fail to think through the consequences of their behavior.

There are three types of behavior consequences: natural, logical, and artificial. Natural consequences are things like, if you don't water your plant

it dies. If you forget to take out the trash, it smells. If you don't study you'll fail. Playing too hard makes you tired. Sleeping too little makes you cranky.

The most common mistake parents make with natural consequences is lecturing or moralizing. With the exception of yelling and other boundary violations, nothing turns children off more quickly than these two blocks to effective communication. (To test this almost universal truth, stop yourself in mid-lecture and ask your child to repeat back your last sentence.) Lecturing and moralizing are fine for broadcasting but they should not be confused with communication, which entails respectful exchange of information. The best way to help children learn natural consequences of behavior is to ask, with the *motivation* to *encourage*, "What do you think will happen if...," followed by, "Do you want that to happen?"

Natural emotional responses to behavior that children *must* learn include:

- Lying, cheating, and stealing reduces trust.
- Aggression creates fear or anger and reduces emotional connection.
- Hitting produces pain.

Logical consequences derive from behavior in ways that make sense but are not naturally occurring. They usually involve infractions of rules with the consequences known in advance. For instance, failure to pay bills on time incurs a surcharge. Smoking in a theater results in eviction. Most of our complaints about injustice rise from departure from logical consequences.

Some consequences we artificially attach to behavior. These tend to be inconsistent and punishing. For instance, the child in an earlier example who leaves his toys on the floor learns one consequence if his parent had a great day at work and quite another if his parent is depressed and irritable from the day's challenges. With artificial consequences, the behavior is less important than the mood and vigilance of the enforcer. Children learn less about regulating their own impulses than manipulating the emotions of others.

The trick in teaching children about behavior is to make an association of the consequences with the motivation, *before* the act. The great task of discipline is getting in front of, instead of lagging behind, our children's behavior.

How We Learn to Anticipate Consequences

Adults seldom do it and children almost never anticipate consequences of behavior choices in logical ways, such as:

- a = b, b = c, a = c.
- If I pull the lamp cord, the lamp will fall and break. If the lamp breaks, I'll be in trouble. Therefore, if I pull the lamp cord, I'll be in trouble.

Instead, we imagine a state of affairs, such as pulling the lamp cord, and experience an emotional response to it. If the parent's reaction to the broken lamp (or pulling the cord) is fear, the child's association is likely to be fear. If it is anger, the reaction is likely to be shame. If it is concern for the child's safety, it is likely to be caution.[3] Unfortunately, most of us learn to inhibit behavior by attaching fear or shame to it. This strategy carries the tremendous risks, described above and summarized below:

- Fear and shame are global emotions about the self, especially about capacities and ability to cope. They are difficult to limit to specific behavior.
- Fear and shame deteriorate concentration, making mistakes, lapses, and distractions more likely.
- Fear and shame disempower, making more likely the most common form of re-empowerment: anger and resentment.
- If fear and shame are strongly internalized, the child feels punished every time the impulse occurs. If they are not, excitement is created by the bad behavior, either from the "forbidden fruit" effect or from the self-assertion of defiance.

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[3] Temperamental contribution plays a big part here. A fearful child will experience a certain amount of fear no matter how well the parent responds with concern for safety.

Compassionate discipline empowers children to do something better when the impulse to do undesirable behavior arises. We can never simply apply consequences to behavior without helping the child reestablish positive motivation. Thinking about how wrong or bad they are or what kind of trouble they will be in is never enough. They must primarily think of what behavior will be better for them. For example, the toddler wanting to pull the lamp cord must associate with that impulse concern for his or her safety *and* a shifting of interest into something safer, like pulling the cord of a toy.[4]

Hitting, Biting, Scratching

Although normal for toddlers, this exasperating behavior must draw firm discipline applied with great care. First of all, it in no way means the same when a toddler does these behaviors as when an older child does them. It is neither disrespect nor willful defiance. It starts as testing new skills and develops into expressions of frustration. The danger lies in reinforcing the behavior as a form of re-empowerment. That is, to allay disappointment, the child hits or scratches or bites. The most effective discipline is to ask the child, "Do you want to hurt me? Do you want to hurt your sister? Do you want to hurt the dog?" If a hurt or angry child answers in the affirmative, ask why. If the child is too young to respond, hold his or her hands tightly and say something like, "I must stop you when you hurt other people, until you are able to stop yourself." **Do not hit the child back.** This not only reinforces violence as a viable solution to problems, it implies that the one with the most power wins. What you want to teach is that everyone loses with violence. Parental self-regulation is crucial here. Practice HEALS!

Time outs should be used as discipline whenever the child is out of control The guideline for time outs is one minute per year of the child's age. When children emerge from time out sessions, they should be able to say that they have calmed down. When they are older, they should be able to describe their motivation and how they could have done better. By six years old, they should be able to describe how the recipient experienced the hitting, scratching, and biting.

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[4] Of course, the safety risk in a "toddler-proofed" home is minimized by firmly taping the cord to the wall.

Lying, Cheating, Stealing

These unpleasant behaviors are also normal for children under five years. Lying appears first, occurring almost as soon as the child understands being called to account. To discipline lying, remember that the purpose is not to punish the past but to encourage future behavior. The discipline has to make it easier for the child to tell the truth in the future. It is important to understand the context of the lie. Did the child feel afraid to tell the truth? Did high anxiety distort the truth in the child's mind? Express your disappointment or intolerance with the lie, but always renew the connection. For example, "I cannot have you lie to me. That is very wrong." Then renew connection with a hug. "I really want you to tell the truth."

Older children lie for the same reasons as adults: to cover up mistakes or misbehavior. If the lie covers up a mistake, it conveys valuable information about your relationship with the child. The lie can be used as an opportunity to repair communication so that the child can feel safe and supported in reporting a mistake. When it involves misbehavior, the difficult task is disciplining the misbehavior without encouraging more lies. One way do this is to add an extra sanction for lying. But the more effective way is to make a general policy of disciplining the misbehavior and rewarding the truth telling. For example, your child tells you that he acted out in school today. "I'm really proud of your honesty. That shows that I can trust you to come to me for help when you misbehave." Together you decide on an appropriate discipline for the reported behavior. The negotiation could go like this. "You were talking with your friends when the teacher asked you to read your assignment. What do you think would be a good sanction to help you focus on reading in the future?" The usual resolution would be something like reading that assignment or an extra one right now. Of course, the ultimate teacher of honesty and truth telling comes from the modeling of parents. It is difficult for children to value the truth if they see their parents lie even about trivial things.

Cheating and stealing in very young children is more of an attempt to get attention than a desire to gain unfair advantage. To grasp the significance of cheating and stealing, a child must understand social rules, which most children cannot do before seven years old. Prior to this age, parents need to deal with stealing and cheating with a firm "no," renewing connection with a

hug, "I like it when you're honest. What can help you to be honest in the future?"

When children reach six or seven, parents need to help them appreciate the importance of fair play in terms of the response of others: "People like honesty, they don't like cheating. You'll lose friends if you cheat. Would you want to be friends with someone who cheats?" More important, emphasize the child's own sense of pride for doing the right thing: "Think of how proud you are when you do things honestly. You like being proud of what you do."

Power Struggles vs. Empowerment

Power struggles happen when people of any age contend with one another to avoid painful states of powerlessness. Failing to internally regulate powerless feelings, they try to take power from each other by forcing submission. "Triumph" over the other provides temporary relief of powerlessness but at the price of resentment and hidden hostility.

Empowerment is the ability to validate the Core Value of self and children. It gives children the right and the confidence to offer solutions to problems that respect the best interests of all involved. Empowerment is a slow and gradual learning process that helps children develop the ability to stand on their own while participating in emotional connection with others.

Empowering Children

Goals of empowerment:

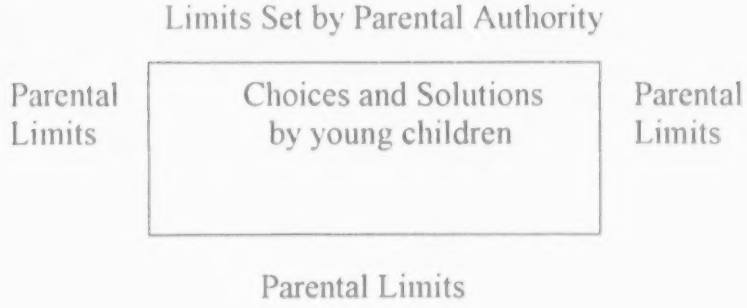
- **Teach the Four Rs of Parenting:**
  - ◊ **resourcefulness**
  - ◊ **responsibility**
  - ◊ **respect**
  - ◊ **regulation of impulses and emotions**

- **Marshall the child's intelligence and creativity for solving the problem, in consideration of other people's rights, rather than opposing or resenting your solution.**

- **Build problem-solving skills in children.**
- **Teach negotiation skills.**
- **Model compassion.**
- **Teach morality (arbitrarily exerting power and control over others is wrong).**
- **Protect children from negative influence by peers.**

Empowerment Means Making Choices within Natural, Legal, and Social Limitation

Children develop self-esteem, problem-solving skills, and compassion when they make choices within clearly defined limits set by parents. The limits parents set form a box around areas of choice for the children. As children grow in problem-solving skill and respect for the rights of others, the box of choices and solutions grows larger.



The box below shows areas in which older children can make limited choices. Once again, the limits set by parents widen as the children mature and develop responsibility and respect for the rights of others.

Limits Set by Parental Authority

Parental Limits

Child's Choices and Solutions:
privileges
responsibilities
chores/duties
personal appearance
rewards
sanctions
allowance/money gifts

Parental Limits

Parental Limits

Privileges - activities, gifts, and treats that are not rights, e.g., going out at night, using the car, getting designer clothes, eating out with friends.

Personal responsibilities - homework, picking up after oneself, and, in most cultures, carrying one's own dish into the kitchen.

Chores/duties - equitable contribution to the smooth running of the household; never a personal responsibility like putting one's own clothes in laundry.

Personal appearance - dress, personal grooming.

Rewards - special incentives for extra-chore behavior.

Sanctions - consequences of failures of responsibility, chores, duties, or for misbehavior. Sanctions include natural consequences or some loss of privilege.

Allowance/money gifts - The purpose of allowance and money gifts for birthdays and the like is to teach children the vital skill of managing money. Therefore, payments should be in proportion to parents' income and not designed to match the allowances of other children. Loss or reductions of allowances should not be used as sanctions for failures of responsibility or chores or for misbehavior, for this would undermine the goal of enhancing money management.

Setting up the Empowerment Model of Parenting

At first children may not trust the empowerment model. Older children may see it as another form of power struggle. To gain their trust, it is best to set up the model in a formal family meeting. Even if the children resist at first, keep the structure in place for at least three weeks. By that time they should see that it works much better for them and for you.

Begin the meeting by reading the following, which is repeated in the appendices for easy access of everyone to sign.

Family Empowerment Agreement

We hereby agree that our connection as a family is important and valuable to us. We care about each other and want the best for one another. We acknowledge that each individual in the family:

- is a separate person, important, valuable, and lovable in his/her own right;
- has the right to grow and develop fully and to realize his/her fullest potential;
- has needs, desires, and preferences that will sometimes conflict with those of other members of the family;
- has the right to come up with solutions to problems that consider the rights, needs, desires, and preferences of other family members and that fall within safety, health, and growth guidelines set by parents and the law;
- agrees to negotiate respectfully with other members of the family, without resorting to the use of power, control, and violence.

Accordingly, we agree to:

- state our problems clearly and specifically, without blame;
- try to think of more than one solution for each problem, considering the point of view of everyone involved;
- discuss the possible effects of solutions;
- find solutions that make everyone feel as good about themselves as possible;
- implement agreements with sincere effort to make them work;

- stay cool if agreements don't always work at first;
- give ourselves and each other permission to make mistakes with occasional feedback, but without shame-inducing criticism;
- regularly re-evaluate solutions to see how they're working;

- think before we accuse;
- criticize only behavior, never the person or personality;
- make "I-statements," not "you-statements" about how we feel. Example: "I'm disappointed to hear this," not: "You make me furious;"
- listen to each other respectfully, especially when we disagree;
- never insult, call names, or make sarcastic remarks;
- stick to the topic;
- stay in the present and future--don't dredge up the past;
- hold dialogues, not lectures;
- try to answer each other, not withdraw or say, "I don't know," or, "Do whatever you want;"
- think realistically:
  - don't think the worst right away, consider evidence
  - avoid "all or nothing" or "black and white" thinking.
  - avoid the words, "never" and "always."

Signatures:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Everyone in the family should sign the agreement. Even two year olds can make a crayon mark.

Family Solution-Finding Guide

Establish a weekly family meeting of 20-30 minutes at a set time convenient for everyone. Merely making this time gives importance to the family.

Parents should come to the first meeting with a list of all necessary chores.

- Everyone chooses equally from the chore list, allowing for differences in available time and special talents. Family members must negotiate disagreements.

- With each item, the person who chooses must also indicate a sanction for failing to accomplish the chore.

In subsequent meetings, behavior problems that anyone in the family has should be aired.

Behavior problems (including problems that children might have with parents' behavior)

- Brain-storm solutions.
  - Come up with as many as possible.
  - Don't evaluate them during the brainstorming session and certainly don't dismiss them.
  - Be creative, don't be afraid to suggest outlandish ideas, they sometimes work.

- Decide the solution that is best for everybody, remembering that everybody's feelings are important.

- Plan to implement the selected solution.
  - Decide who will do what when where and how.
  - Plan the consequence for compliance or non compliance.
  - Plan a time for evaluation of the implemented solution.

- Implement the solution.

- Evaluate the solution at the planned time.

Resolving Disputes

Primary goal: **Each person feels good about himself/herself; each feels important, regarded, respected, valuable; no one feels put-upon, taken advantage of, exploited, or used.**

Step 1: Define the problem <u>with explanation</u> (not justification) of why it's a problem), and ask for solutions.

"Here's the problem, and this is why it's a problem for me. What do you think is the best solution?"

Example:

> "I have a problem with the stereo being so loud, because I'm trying to concentrate on my work (or relax or watch TV, etc.). How can we work out this problem?"

If you disagree with the solution, don't attack or put down the other person.

- Validate the suggestion as a *possible* solution.
- State your reasons for disagreeing.
- Solicit another solution.

Example of a solution with which you'll disagree:

> "You could concentrate on your work later."

Response:

> "Okay, that's one solution, but I need (want) to concentrate now. What's another solution?"

Step Two: Reach a mutual agreement about which solution to implement.

Step Three: Implement Solution, with a commitment to make it work (don't set it up to fail).

Step Four: Evaluate Solution after it's had a chance to work.

Examples:

> "Our solution has been great, we just don't have that problem anymore."

> "We need to review our solution to the trash problem; it's building up again in the kitchen."

This approach unites the family in solution finding, rather than struggling for power and advantage. It opens the door for creative solutions and enriches the experience for everyone.

Make a sincere attempt to understand your child's (or partner's or parent's) personal goals and preferences.

Example: Family members rarely share the same tolerance for mess (or compulsion for neatness). This often results in a no-win power struggle with everybody feeling put upon and resentful. A sincere attempt to understand both points of view is necessary:

> "I know it's a problem to carry your glass into the kitchen, cause you like to feel like you can relax in your own home. (And I appreciate when you do carry in your glass.) I'm not trying to put a power trip on you, but it's important to me that the house looks neat. What do you think is a fair solution?"
>
> "I don't really mind carrying in my glass, you just hassle me about it if I forget. I don't <u>try</u> to forget."
>
> "If you make a sincere effort to remember to carry in your glass, I'll make a sincere effort not to hassle you if you really do forget. Is that fair?"

Non-Cooperation

Sometimes children simply refuse to comply with even the most skillful attempts to foster cooperation and mutual respect. Rebellion in children is almost always a Core Value issue, which is why children must learn about their Core Value and develop the skill to access it, particularly under stress.

Part III
Specific Skills for Compassionate Parenting

Compassionate Parenting for Infants

- Understand you child's experience of the world.

Your baby's experience of the world is almost entirely emotional. Sensations originating both within the body (gas, nerve twitches, brief muscle spasms, tiny experiences of pleasure and discomfort), and outside it (abrupt sounds, changes in light, temperature, odor) trigger small outbursts of positive and negative emotion. Most of these emotional displays are transient and without significance. The exception is the distress cry, distinguished by intensity, contortion of muscles, down-turned mouth (like the Mask of Tragedy) reddened face, and closed or squinted eyes.

Remember that change stimulates emotion. If your baby reacts to abrupt changes negatively, make gradual changes whenever possible. For instance, some children feel exhilarated when parents fling open the drapes and allow the morning sun to drench the room. Others can tolerate only a gradual raising of the shade to slowly dissipate the shadows.

You cannot spoil an infant by answering distress cries. Research clearly shows that high parental responsiveness to distress cries in the first year of life leads to security and greater independence in subsequent years. Infants are learning two crucial emotional skills in their first year: to trust in their own **Core Value** and trust that loved ones will nurture them. Caring response to their distress is a great learning reinforcement, along with compassionate attention to expressions of interest and enjoyment.

While spontaneous expressions of affection are generally a good thing, these should not interfere with the child's interest focused somewhere else. Affection must never be intrusive. If the presence of parents consistently distracts infants from their own interest and enjoyment, they associate distraction or diminishment of interest/enjoyment with a need for parental comfort. This, in combination with the child's temperament, produces the fussy and demanding children our parents described as "spoiled." In contrast, responding to the distress cries of infants tells them that they don't have to worry about support for their acute needs. This secure knowledge

frees them to explore their own interest and enjoyment, which gives parents opportunities to reinforce positive emotional investment.

Use the following table to circle the best description of your infant.

Activity level	Active, energetic	Takes a while to get going, but then active	Quiet
Distractibility	High interest, focus	Surface interest	Continual scanning
Persistence	Keeps trying, though in different ways if initial attempts are unsuccessful	Half-hearted initial efforts	Half-hearted subsequent efforts, quickly gives up
New situations	Curious-enthusiastic	Cautious	Anxious
Intensity	Low arousal	Moderate	High arousal
Adaptability	Easy transitions (e.g., morning to nap time)	Transitions troublesome at first	Most transitions troublesome most of the time
Regularity	Predictable in habits, e.g., sleep, emotional reactions	Somewhat predictable	Unpredictable
Sensory threshold	Likes stimulation	Highly sensitive to initial stimulation, but gradually adapts	Hypersensitive, easily over-stimulated
Mood	Mostly positive	Mixed	Mostly negative

- Understand their emotional motivations.

Physical needs, such as hunger, thirst, and diaper discomfort, trigger crying. However, infants **never cry *just* to have the physical need met**. They also cry for attachment behavior that helps them regulate the emotions triggered by the physical need. In most cases, the largest part of their crying is for the emotional regulation provided by parental attachment behavior. Some brief expression of caring is necessary in meeting any emotional expression of the infant, positive and negative.

- Understand your emotional response to them: the self as parent

Problems with infants center almost exclusively on giving false meaning to temperamental characteristics, which parents tend to see as negative and as the result of poor parenting. **The true measure of parents is not the characteristics of the infant but parental acceptance of the characteristics.**

- Understand your own emotional motivations.

The common motivation of the negative emotions most involved in parenting – guilt, anxiety, and inadequacy – is to learn more and increase competence. Acting on this motivation changes the painful emotion into a positive experience of interest and enjoyment.

- Enjoy your infant

List how you will include brief moments (just a second or two) of appreciation and relaxation in:

Changing:

Feeding:

Dressing:

Bathing:

Describe options for your daily time of uninterrupted enjoyment activity (one minute for each month of your child up to 10 minutes):

1.

2.

3.

4.

86

5.

- Value your infant

List the primary ways your infant is important to you:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

List the primary ways you are important to your infant:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

List how you can respect the individuality of your infant:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

List what interests you about your infant.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

List what other things could interest you about him or her.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

What keeps you from developing these interests?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

How could your list grow by adding self-reward (I am doing a good thing by developing interest in my child)?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

- Express appreciation and interest, through eye contact, cuddling, cooing, soothing, and hugging.

Attachment behavior is also the primary form of communication with infants. In addition to baby talk or "motherese," parents should talk in words to infants.

Eye contact is important to the emotional development of children but should not seem intrusive. The child should learn that pleasant eye contact is available during interactions with parents whenever he or she wants it. In general, boy newborns can tolerate less eye contact than girls. But boys *need* eye contact. Let your child's natural inclination to want to make eye contact guide you.

- Encourage exploration

At around nine months, infants enter an exploration stage that enables them to develop basic sensory-motor skills. They start crawling up a storm and getting into everything in sight. Less obvious but more important, exploration accelerates mental skills of cognitive discrimination – how to tell one thing from another by its properties, such as hard or soft, warm or

cold, big or small. This facilitates the development of basic reasoning skills such as inference – if I pull this it will fall – and, eventually, deduction – all things fall if their balance and support are disturbed. In addition, they learn basic skills of building – putting things on top of things – and even the rudiments of competitiveness when they crawl as if in a race.

It is not only normal but also desirable for children of nine months to four years old to explore their environments. Parents must "toddler proof" their houses for safety, with things like cabinet locks and outlet blocks. The best test for toddler proofing is to take a crawl through the house yourself and be sure that everything "pullable" and "grabable" is not dangerous or breakable.

Compassionate Parenting for Toddlers (age 2-5)

- Understand your toddlers' experience of the world.

Your toddler's experience of the world continues to be almost entirely emotional. Only now children understand that parents and other children have different emotions and different agendas from theirs. For most of the "terrible twos" children play out this new awareness in a kind of negative identity. They don't know who they are, but they know what they're not, they're not whatever you want. Accordingly, the toddler's favorite words are "no" and "mine." Although it can try the patience of the best of parents, this is a natural stage of developing boundaries as children explore differences between themselves and the outside world.

Their new mobility and coordination brings a sense of empowerment and independence but also an increased awareness of their limitations and dependency, which heightens their frustration. The more adventuresome and desirous of exploration, the more frustrated. Boys tend to be more fearless than girls so experience more frustration and more negative and destructive motivations of discipline by parents. Toddlerhood may be the most frustrating period of our lives, followed closely by adolescence and being the parent of a toddler or adolescent.

Parents must understand that in this new desire to feel powerful their children are not trying to take power from them. Toddlers are in no way trying to feel more powerful than parents; they are merely trying to feel more powerful than they previously did. Temperamental contributions can greatly magnify or minimize the effects on parents of the amazing emotional growth spurt of toddlerhood.

Use the following table to circle the best description of your toddler's temperament.

Activity level	Active, energetic	Takes a while to get going, but then active	Quiet
Distractibility	High interest, focus	Surface interest	Continual scanning
Persistence	Keeps trying, though in different ways if initial attempts are unsuccessful	Half-hearted initial efforts	Half-hearted subsequent efforts, quickly gives up
New situations	Curious-enthusiastic	Cautious	Anxious
Intensity	Low arousal	Moderate	High arousal
Adaptability	Easy transitions (e.g., morning to nap time)	Transitions troublesome at first	Most transitions troublesome most of the time
Regularity	Predictable in habits, e.g., sleep, emotional reactions	Somewhat predictable	Unpredictable
Sensory threshold	Likes stimulation	Highly sensitive to initial stimulation, but gradually adapts	Hypersensitive, easily over-stimulated
Mood	Mostly positive	Mixed	Mostly negative

- Understand their emotional motivations.

The primary motivations of toddlers are approach, explore, and learn. From these motivations children develop crucial intellectual skills to classify and discriminate. The toddler is **learning to learn**.

- Understand your emotional responses to them.

The frequent negative and destructive motivations that toddlers experience can easily cause parents to react with feelings of inadequacy, hurt, and anger. Parental self-regulation is perhaps most crucial during toddlerhood.

- Understand your own emotional motivations.

It is especially important for parents of toddlers to resist matching the negative and destructive motivations of their children in kind. Young children cannot easily distinguish between themselves and their behavior, in the face of the rejection they perceive in negative and destructive motivations of their parents' frustrated attempts at discipline. Nor can they tell specific behaviors from their behavior in general while disorganized by the rejection they perceive in parental discipline. In other words, if they consistently feel rejected by the harsh tone of a frustrated parent whenever they get into something they shouldn't, they associate the bad feelings about themselves not with the specific behavior but with exploration in general. Toddlers who feel inhibited in exploration will not learn as efficiently.

- Enjoy your toddler

List how you will include brief moments (just a second or two) of appreciation and relaxation in:

Observing your toddler at play:

Meals:

Dressing:

Bathing:

Reading to him or her:

Describe options for your daily time of uninterrupted enjoyment activity (one minute for each month of your child up to 10 minutes):

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

- Value your toddler

List the primary ways your child is important to you:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

List the primary ways you are important to your child:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

List how you can respect the individuality of your toddler:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

List what interests you about your child.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

List what other things could interest you about him or her.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

What keeps you from developing these interests?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

How could your list grow by adding self-reward (I am doing a good thing by developing interest in my child)?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

- Express appreciation and interest, through eye contact, cuddling, cooing, soothing, and hugging.

- Teach emotional regulation

The amount of emotional vocabulary a toddler can learn is highly limited. Some children can begin to learn key words, such as "happy" and "hurt" at two and a half, while most develop a moderate emotional vocabulary at about three or three and a half. The Appendix of this book demonstrates how to teach emotional vocabulary to small children.

Model positive motivation. Change negative and destructive motivation.

Positive	Negative	Destructive
Approach (interest, enjoyment) **Protect** **Nurture** **Encourage** **Cooperate** **Promote child's best interests through Influence/Guidance/ Limit-setting**	**Avoid** **Ignore** **Manipulate** **Control** **Withdraw**	**Criticize** **Reject** **Demand** **Dominate** **Coerce** **Threaten** **Attack** (verbally or physically)

- Children respond primarily to the motivations of their parents, not to what we do or say.

- Negative and destructive motivations almost invariably produce negative and destructive motivations in them.

- Although positive motivation is not always successful, negative motivation always fails.

- **We must not match negative and destructive motivations in kind. Doing so guarantees defiance and escalation of negative emotions or compliance with hidden resentment and accumulating hostility.**

➢ Teach them the power of compassion.

Toddlers can begin to learn the rudiments of compassion. Begin by teaching them that other people have emotional experience different from theirs. You can introduce the concept of "My Good Heart" to toddlers to give them a sense of their Core Value.

> "I like it when you hug me. How does that make your Good Heart feel?"
> "I really like it when you listen to me. How does that make your Good Heart feel?"
> "Do you want to hurt the dog? Think of your Good Heart."
> "Do you want to make the cat afraid? What will that do for your Good Heart?"

➢ Discipline

Most of the emotional problems of toddlers come from precipitous drops from interest into disappointment. Anger or anxiety fills the internal void. *Shifting interest* from an undesired area into an okay one is the key emotional skill for them to learn. This task is easier if parents learn to anticipate times of heightened stimulation, such as transitions, shopping, and visits with adults, especially when other young children are present. Prepare the child with a choice of two things as backup interest catchers. Before you go into a store, designate some interesting activity to which the child can look forward when you leave the store or when you get back home.

Instructions to young children should be short, clear, and in a slightly lower tone of voice than normal for you. Children of all ages lack adult proficiency at auditory processing. Much of the frustration of parents who feel their children are not listening to them comes from this disparity in processing spoken words. Yelling, of course, raises the anxiety level and makes it even harder for children to register what you mean. To learn if your children

register what you say, try your usual form of giving instructions and then ask them to repeat back to you what you have just said.

It is always best to use one or two additional sensory modalities when giving them instructions. Stoop to their eye level, make respectful eye contact, gently touch their hands or arms, and say, "I need you to pick up your toys right now. Could you please repeat back to me what I asked you to do?" You will have a much higher chance of getting your instructions repeated back, and in getting cooperative behavior.

It is not only normal but also desirable for toddlers to explore their environments. Parents must "toddler proof" their houses for safety, with things like cabinet locks and outlet blocks. The best test for toddler proofing is to take a crawl through the house yourself and be sure that everything "pullable" and "grabable" is neither dangerous nor breakable.

As children approach the end of toddlerhood, compassionate parents begin giving fewer instructions. Rather, they help children come up with solutions. When children make mistakes, whine, or complain, parents compassionately ask, "What can you do to make it better for yourself?"

Temper Tantrums

The bane of parents' existence, temper tantrums are normal from about 20 months to three or three and a half years. Temper tantrums are rarely expressions of willful, spoiled, or poorly behaved children. They are more often your child's response to torrents of confusion and utter powerlessness. The developmental task children gradually learn is to re-empower themselves by reestablishing interest, enjoyment, and affiliation.

Anticipation of high-risk times, e.g., high stimulation, excitability, physical discomfort, and any precipitous blocking of interest or enjoyment, helps parents to head off the worst of temper tantrums. To get an idea of what challenges grocery stores present to toddlers, try walking around the aisles that attract children, looking on the eye level of toddlers. There you will find the brightest colors, most exciting shapes, and messages that scream out to the child to "ask mom for me!" For instance, on the cereal aisle at adult eye level we find high-fiber, low-fat, non-sugared, vitamin enriched foods like

Special K, Wheaties, and corn flakes. On the eye level of the toddler, we see Count Chocola, Frankenberry, and minature chocolate chip cookies. Very smart people became rich by spending many hundreds of hours in developing ways to over-stimulate your little child.

While we can develop skill to anticipate and reduce the higher risks of temper tantrums, no parent can eliminate them altogether. Once a temper tantrum begins, safety is paramount. Be sure there is nothing to grab or throw. If children seem inclined to bang their heads, pick them up. If their emotional display is disturbing to other people in a public place, carry them to a more private space. Believe it or not, a public emotional display makes it harder for the child to re-empower, as if, on some level, they are embarrassed by their powerlessness.

In a calm time after the temper tantrum – bedtime is good – commiserate with the child for being upset. For children with verbal skills, review the word "disappointed." (See "Teaching Emotional Vocabulary to Children" in the Appendix.) Ask what the child might have done to make it better.

Language Acquisition

Talk and read to your children as often as possible. Whenever you give them an object, name it. However, most children acquire language from other children. Socializing your child with peers is the most important thing you can do to help them acquire language.

Chores

A more thorough discussion of chores follows in the next section. But it is never too early to start a child with chores. Even a two year old will benefit from a "chore" like smoothing the bed with his or her hand after you make it. This teaches the child responsibility and gives them a sense of achievement and mastery.

While there are many poor toys on the market, one line that is wonderful for toddlers includes things like pretend vacuum cleaners and household appliances. Have your child run the toy vacuum cleaner to "brighten up"

after you have cleaned the rug and you will start a habit that can last through adolescence.

A New Sibling

The first trauma in the lives of many children is getting a new brother and sister. This is especially difficult during toddlerhood when children are likely to associate their newly emerging negativity toward their parents with the "punishment" of getting a new arrival. Preparing a young child for a sibling is so important that whole books are written on it. The best for parents in my view is, *Siblings without Rivalry: How to Help Your Children Live Together So You Can Live Too* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish.

Compassionate Parenting for Children 6-12

- Understand your child's experience of the world.

Children in this stage of development learn to test and modify their emotions and motivations with inferences about reality, their own capacities, and what others expect of them. Their perceptions of the emotional experience of others set limits on their own motivations. They are learning to reason about how they react to others and how others react to them. It is a period of hyper focus on the behavior of peers that culminates in adolescence.

Use the following table to circle the best description of your child.

Activity level	Active, energetic	Takes a while to get going, but then active	Quiet
Distractibility	High interest, focus	Surface interest	Continual scanning
Persistence	Keeps trying, though in different ways if initial attempts are unsuccessful	Half-hearted initial efforts	Half-hearted subsequent efforts, quickly gives up
New situations	Curious-enthusiastic	Cautious	Anxious
Intensity	Low arousal	Moderate	High arousal
Adaptability	Easy transitions (e.g., morning to nap time)	Transitions troublesome at first	Most transitions troublesome most of the time
Regularity	Predictable in habits, e.g., sleep, emotional reactions	Somewhat predictable	Unpredictable
Sensory threshold	Likes stimulation	Highly sensitive to initial stimulation, but gradually adapts	Hypersensitive, easily over-stimulated
Mood	Mostly positive	Mixed	Mostly negative

List how you will include brief moments (just a second or two) of appreciation and relaxation in:

Observing your child at play:

Meals:

Talking:

Describe options for your daily time of uninterrupted enjoyment activity (one minute for each month of your child up to 10 minutes):

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

- Value your child

List the primary ways your child is important to you:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

List the primary ways you are important to your child:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

List how you can respect the individuality of your child:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

List what interests you about your child.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

List what other things could interest you about him or her.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

What keeps you from developing these interests?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

How could your list grow by adding self-reward (I am doing a good thing by developing interest in my child)?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

- Help them internalize encouragement to grow and learn.
- Help them use their awareness and intelligence for growth and development.
- Teach them emotional regulation.

By now children should have a pretty good emotional vocabulary. They are ready to begin learning HEALS. You can teach it to them and you can order a practice audio tape that will help them internalize this invaluable technique of emotional regulation.

The *My Good Heart* drawing book companion to *Compassionate Parenting* helps them develop Core Value.

When your child is distressed, angry, or hurt, gently say, "Remember your 'Good Heart.' Your Core Value is still okay."

- Help them behave in their short *and* long term best interests.
- Help them develop self-discipline.

Model positive motivation. Change negative and destructive motivation.

Positive	Negative	Destructive
Approach (interest, enjoyment) **Protect** **Nurture** **Encourage** **Cooperate** **Promote child's best interests through Influence/Guidance/ Limit-setting**	**Avoid** **Ignore** **Manipulate** **Control** **Withdraw**	**Criticize** **Reject** **Demand** **Dominate** **Coerce** **Threaten** **Attack** (verbally or physically)

- Children respond primarily to the motivations of their parents, not to what we do or say.

- Negative and destructive motivations almost invariably produce negative and destructive motivations in them.

- Although positive motivation is not always successful, negative motivation always fails.

- **We must not match negative and destructive motivations in kind. Doing so guarantees defiance and escalation of negative emotions or compliance with hidden resentment and accumulating hostility.**

Give your children the handout, "My Best Interests" on the next page.

My Best Interests

Behaving in my "best interests" means doing what will most likely prove best for me. Behaving in my **short-term** best interests means doing what I prefer to do right now.

My long-term best interests are met by doing whatever helps me:

- Grow and stay healthy;
- Do things I'm **proud** of;
- Do whatever I do better than the last time I did it.

How do I prefer to invest my interest and enjoyment right now?

- Playing outside
- Cooperating (doing chores and other things expected of me)
- Watching TV
- Learning about myself and my emotions
- Doing homework
- Playing computer games
- Learning about other people and their emotions
- Other _____

Three Questions of Power and Emotional Intelligence

Is it in my long-term best interest to do my preference right now or later?

How much time do I need to spend on my long-term best interest right now in order to get my preference later?

If I do my preference right now, how much time will I need to spend on my long-term best interest later?

- Give them affection

Don't slack off giving affection because your child is getting bigger. Even if they begin to fidget in your hugs or complain about kissing you good night, they really appreciate the caring that motivates your efforts. Continue to make eye contact, cuddle, and give massages whenever they can tolerate it. And don't take it personally if their tolerance wanes.

- Allow them to explore different aspects of themselves.

Note: Children enter the developmental phase of adolescence at different rates. If your child is over 10, be sure to read the next section.

Compassionate Parenting for Children 13-18

- Understand your children's experience of the world.

The most difficult and dangerous time in most people's lives is adolescence. Monumental physical, psychological, and social changes overtake most children in this often-turbulent transition to adulthood. While their thought processes are much advanced from earlier stages of childhood, the emotional maturity of adolescents actually regresses and takes on the added delight of frequent mood swings.

Only a small part of this distortion of emotions and mood is due to the flood of hormones adding intensity to emotional experience. The real culprit is massive uncertainty that produces an accelerated level of self-consciousness. Adolescents continually question their own competencies in the world and their relationships to peers. Consider the effects of having to continually wonder, "Who am I? What will I do with my life? Where will I go to school? Where will I live? Who will I love? How successful will I be? What kind of adult will I be?"

Their heightened self-consciousness forces a re-angling of the self to fit in with peers. Focusing exclusively on that which peers see of them, they suffer a "looking glass self" and external regulation of self-esteem. All they are is what they see in the mirror and what they hear about themselves from peers. The unrelenting focus on the superficial only creates more anxiety, guilt, shame, and self-doubt, which they try to remedy with superficial changes. This makes them susceptible to radical alterations in their appearance. If they look different, they might like themselves more.

The mood swings of adolescents reflect vacillations in their estimates of themselves, as they veer from pride to shame about their appearance, size, strength, sexuality, desire to be seen or to escape notice, sociability, competition (winner/loser) abilities, and skills.

The heavy emphasis on the superficial separates teens from their Core Value. Whenever anyone remains separated from Core Value, the sense of self seems inauthentic. This inconsistent, "false-self" syndrome compels

them toward a negative identity that expresses itself as opposition to parents ("I don't know who I am but I know who I'm not, I'm not whatever you want,") and as a distorted identity with peers: "I'll be whatever you want."

Teenagers become far more aware of their emotional and physical dependency even as their need for greater independence intensifies. It is common to hear adolescents say (or at least mumble) to their parents, "I want you out of my life, I don't even want to talk to you or see your face. But take me to the dance." Pulling away from parents invokes guilt for failing to sustain interest, compassion, trust, and love. They tend to blame the guilt on their parents. Blame produces anger and resentment, resulting in obnoxious behavior. In response to the obnoxious behavior, parents often push them further away, stimulating the shame of rejection, which produces still more obnoxious behavior.

Emotions and the Depth of Self

To understand how adolescents get stuck in the anxiety-guilt-shame-obnoxious behavior trap, consider how humans acquire depth to the sense of self. Infants come into the world with temperaments that produce highly varying levels of:

- Anxiety
- Interest/Enjoyment (Shame occurs with an abrupt cut off of interest/enjoyment)
- Fear
- Core Value (converts negative experience into positive, producing comfort, soothing, euphoria, and motivation to value)

Accumulating life experience, centered on maintaining attachment bonds and on environmental mastery/competence, gouges out an emotional depth of self. Anxiety forms the top level of the Emotional Depth Chart. A combination of fear plus guilt or shame, anxiety serves as a generalized alarm system tripped by change or possible change. Anxiety is necessary for survival in helping us recognize possible danger. But in many people, the anxiety alarm is switched to the "on" position most of the time. This continual arousal leaves little room before raging fear takes over whenever actual danger or failure looms over the horizon.

The fear component of anxiety comes from the perception, often very vague, that something bad will happen. The guilt component rises from the perception of personal responsibility for the bad thing, especially if it causes or may cause hurt or disappointment in others. The shame component of anxiety comes from a perceived inability to cope with the bad that may happen. The corrective motivation of anxiety tells us to learn more, go beneath the surface for deeper understanding, and to widen coping capacities. If we follow that motivation, the anxiety gets better, if we do not, it worsens.

Guilt, the second layer of the Emotional Depth Chart, is a bad feeling about the self for doing something that violates trust or that hurts others. It occurs automatically with reductions of interest, trust, compassion, and love for attachment figures. Its corrective motivation is to reinstate interest, trust, compassion, and love. If we follow that motivation, the guilt goes away; if we do not, it gets worse.

Shame occupies the third level of the Emotional Depth Chart, coming from perceived failure or rejection, which causes loss of value for the self due to perceived loss of value or esteem from others. The corrective motivation of shame is to increase value of the self and others, which can only occur by going deeper within the self to access Core Value. If we follow that motivation, the shame ameliorates; if we do not, it gets worse.

On the fourth level of the Emotional Depth Chart lies the primal human fear of involuntary isolation, deprivation, and annihilation. This fear is so intense that it drives us naturally to learn and understand more, to sharpen skills, and build affiliations. If these prove insufficient, the corrective motivation pulls us to the deepest level of self for the ultimate value that links us to a wider universe, if not divinity, and to the perception of ultimate immortality.

At the deepest level of self, we find our Core Value. Here the pain and distress of the top levels changes to positive experience. The only motivation of Core Value is to heal, correct, improve, and value.

Dynamics

When any level of the Emotional Depth Chart worsens, the brain subverts the natural corrective motivation of the experience in favor of immediate reduction of discomfort or pain through various avoidance or defensive strategies, such as blame, anger, resentment, drinking, affairs, workaholism, and other compulsive behaviors.

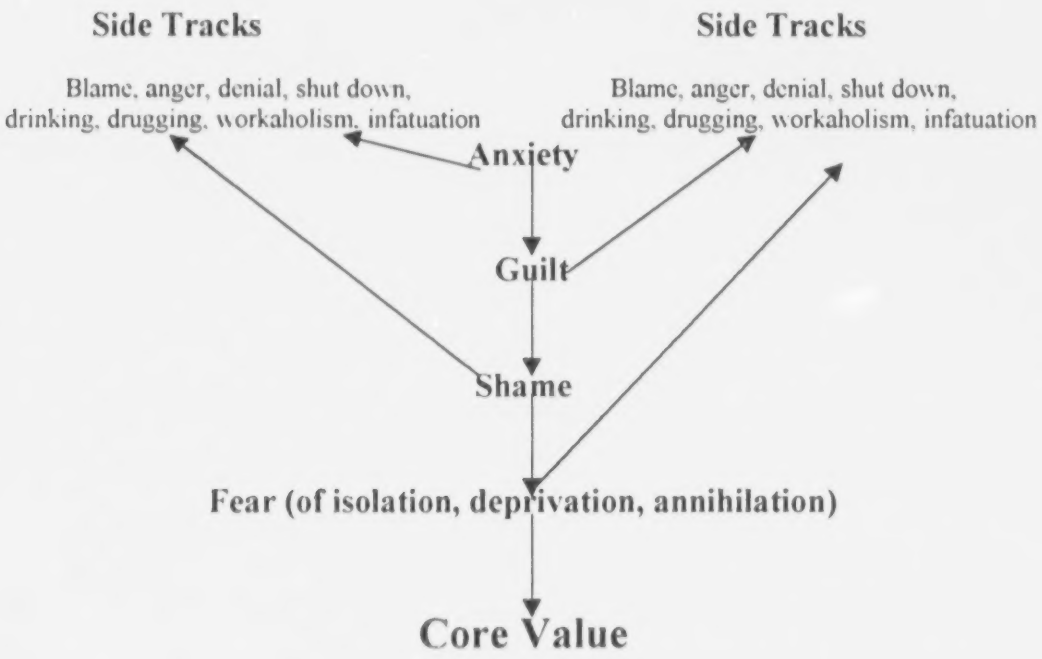
Avoidance and defensive strategies inevitably worsen guilt by further reducing investments of interest, trust, compassion, and love. They worsen shame by increasing the possibility of failure and rejection. They worsen fear by reinforcing the perceived *in*ability to heal, correct, improve, or value, which seems to require the defensive and avoidance adjustments.

The depth of the respective levels of anxiety, guilt, shame, and fear determines how in touch or out of touch with Core Value we remain over the course of our lives.

Emotional Depth Chart

Emotion	Interpretation/ Explanation	Negative Motivation: reduce the pain	Numbing and Side-tracking	Corrective Motivation: heal, correct, improve, value
Anxiety	Possible loss, rejection, failure, exposure, inability to cope, self-doubt	Scan, avoid, distract, outrun the threats, seek external validation (these only reinforce fear of loss, rejection, failure, exposure, inability to cope and self-doubt, creating an inauthentic sense of self incapable of internal validation)	Blame, anger, denial, shut down, drinking, drugging, workaholism, infatuation	Learn more, understand more, go beneath the surface
Guilt	Failure to emotionally connect, protect, nurture, provide, value	Self-punishment, punishment of those who stimulate the guilt or who do not relieve it with absolution	Blame, anger, denial, shut down, drinking, drugging, workaholism, infatuation	Reconnect emotionally, protect, nurture, provide, value and/or go deeper
Shame	Inadequate, unworthy, unfit	Withdraw, sever bonds, give up, despair, loss of will	Blame, anger, denial, shut down, drinking, drugging, workaholism, infatuation	Reinforce value apart from possession, go deeper
Fear of isolation, deprivation, annihilation	Disaster, tragedy, catastrophe	Embrace (increase tolerance of) isolation, deprivation, pain	Blame, anger, denial, shut down, drinking, drugging, workaholism, infatuation	Learn more, Understand, go deeper
Core Value	A state of grace; awareness of personal value, with motivation to value, love, invest positive emotions	None	None	**Value Heal Correct Improve**

Anxiety, guilt and shame block Core Value and make it virtually impossible to choose behavior in one's long-term advantage. Getting stuck on any level above Core Value impairs the ability to convert negative experience into positive, to self-soothe, and to value, adding a measure of compulsion to most behaviors. Young children can get stuck on the top two levels of anxiety and guilt. Adolescents can include the third level of shame. Adults can get stuck on any level, although males are more likely to confront the fear level by seeking isolation, deprivation, or high-risk behaviors.



The Appendix has a section on Core Value to give to your teenager to help him/her understand it and develop the skill to invoke it.

Use the following table to circle the best description of your adolescent.

Activity level	Active, energetic	Takes a while to get going, but then active	Quiet
Distractibility	High interest, focus	Surface interest	Continual scanning
Persistence	Keeps trying, though in different ways if initial attempts are unsuccessful	Half-hearted initial efforts	Half-hearted subsequent efforts, quickly gives up
New situations	Curious-enthusiastic	Cautious	Anxious
Intensity	Low arousal	Moderate	High arousal
Adaptability	Easy transitions (e.g., morning to nap time)	Transitions troublesome at first	Most transitions troublesome most of the time
Regularity	Predictable in habits, e.g., sleep, emotional reactions	Somewhat predictable	Unpredictable
Sensory threshold	Likes stimulation	Highly sensitive to initial stimulation, but gradually adapts	Hypersensitive, easily over-stimulated
Mood	Mostly positive	Mixed	Mostly negative

- Understand their emotional motivations.
- Understand your emotional responses to them.

Why isn't what I do for them enough?

- Understand your own emotional motivations.

Realize your own Core Value and help them realize their own. Help them understand that their Core Value increases as they recognize that of others.

- Enjoy them

List how you will include brief moments (just a second or two) of appreciation and relaxation in:

Observing your child at leisure:

Meals:

Talking:

Describe options for your daily time of uninterrupted enjoyment activity (one minute for each month of your child up to 10 minutes):

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

- Value your child

List the primary ways your child is important to you:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

List the primary ways you are important to your child:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

List how you can respect the individuality of your child:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

List what interests you about your teenager.

1.
2.
3.
4.

5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

List what other things could interest you about him or her.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

What keeps you from developing these interests?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

How could your list grow by adding self-reward (I am doing a good thing by developing interest in my teenager)?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

- Help them internalize encouragement to grow and learn.
- Help them use their awareness and intelligence for growth and development.
- Teach them emotional regulation.

Model positive motivation. Change negative and destructive motivation.

Positive	Negative	Destructive
Approach (interest, enjoyment) **Protect** **Nurture** **Encourage** **Cooperate** **Promote child's best interests through Influence/Guidance/ Limit-setting**	**Avoid** **Ignore** **Manipulate** **Control** **Withdraw**	**Criticize** **Reject** **Demand** **Dominate** **Coerce** **Threaten** **Attack** (verbally or physically)

- Children respond primarily to the motivations of their parents, not to what we do or say.
- Negative and destructive motivations almost invariably produce negative and destructive motivations in them.
- Although positive motivation is not always successful, negative motivation always fails.
- **We must not match negative and destructive motivations in kind. Doing so guarantees defiance and escalation of negative emotions or compliance with hidden resentment and accumulating hostility.**

➢ Help them behave in their short *and* long term best interests.

➢ Help them develop self-discipline.

Give your teenagers "Power and Emotional Intelligence" in the Appendix.

➢ Give Affection

➢ Express appreciation and interest, through eye contact, cuddling, cooing, soothing, and hugging.

- Model affection with other adults.

Allow them to be themselves

- Allow them to explore different aspects of themselves.
- Allow them to develop their fullest potential as individual human beings.

Teenagers and the False Idol of Trust

A special approach to trust is required of families with teenagers. Through no fault of their own, they experience compelling feelings that pull them away from attachment. The developmental stage of adolescence *requires* separation from the attachment bond of childhood. Not coincidentally, teenagers suffer extreme doubts about their suitability for attachment relationships, particularly whether they can maintain interest, compassion, trust, and love and whether they are worthy of these emotional gifts from others. The resulting guilt, shame, and abandonment/engulfment anxiety, natural motivations to reattach, have little chance of positive resolution when attachment only reinforces fear and loathing of the chronic powerless states of childhood. Their most accessible form of self-empowerment, then, centers on anger, resentment, and rebellion.

An overload of guilt, shame, and abandonment/engulfment anxiety disorganizes the underdeveloped adolescent self, making it much less able to regulate impulses. Unregulated impulses become the strongest organizing factor during states of powerlessness. Their resulting disrespectful behavior toward parents (when self-respect is low, consistent respect for others seems elusive) produces still more guilt, shame, and abandonment/engulfment anxiety, made only worse when beleaguered parents react with derision and rejection. Given this searing ambivalence about attachment, it is really unfair to hold adolescents to standards of trust that we would expect from loved ones at most other stages of development. In fact, trust is a red herring in negotiations with teenagers. Raising trust as an issue merely increases their shame of untrustworthiness and lessens their capacity for impulse control.

A more viable strategy is to de-emphasize, if not ignore completely, issues of attachment trust. Aim instead for the more palatable notions of social

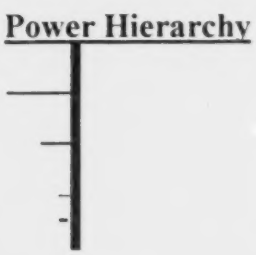
reliability and cooperation. Attachment interactions can then be framed as proving grounds to develop skills useful in the social world, which is of far more interest to them anyway.

Any motivation to increase power seems irresistible to adolescents. *Responsibility* should be framed as the primary source of power. The more responsibility one assumes, the more power one achieves. Generally speaking, the responsible adolescent has enormous power to *control* the amount of hassle, resentment, and bitterness they endure.

To help teenagers adapt to a more pro-social form of self-empowerment, ask them to solve problems (choose courses of action, as well as sanctions for deviation from chosen courses) *as if* they were the parent (or teacher or school administrator). This helps instill the most important lesson they must learn: to think through the consequences of behavior in relation to the self and others.

Remember also that children of any age, but especially adolescents, will be manipulative. Manipulation is less a character trait than an adaptation to a power imbalance. When power is concentrated at the top of a system, in a family, social, or business organization, there are two apparent ways that lower-ranking members can achieve extra reward, status, and self-respect:

- lord over those below (downward comparison);
- manipulate (or subvert) those on top.

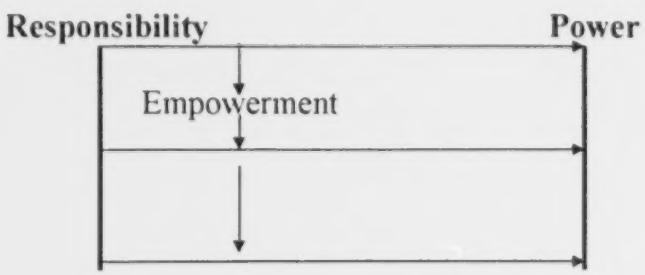


Of course, the hierarchical power system requires oppression and appeasement to maintain itself. Even when successful, the system is loaded with inherent resentment and hostility for the apparently arbitrary distribution of power and resources.

"All right," you say, "we accept that manipulation is the natural result of a hierarchical power structure, but we still don't want children to be manipulative." The trick is to discourage manipulation *without* inhibiting resourcefulness, initiative, and creativity, of which manipulation is only one component. A viable rule is: Never punish children for attempts at manipulation (so long as no lies are told or physical harm done), but never let them get away with manipulating. Parental guidance can take the form of: "Nice try, but you're going to have to solve this problem, not dance around it."

Responsibility and Power

In successful families and organizations, power is clearly a function of responsibility. The more responsibility the parties assume, the more power they enjoy. **Power is exerted over others only to carry out responsibility.** For instance, parents are responsible for the safety, health, growth, and education of their children. Their power is appropriately used in those circumstances primarily as a vehicle for developing more responsibility in their children, i.e., *empowering* them. The more power one enjoys, the more responsibility that person bears for empowerment of those with less power.



Make sure that everyone in the family understands that power is a function of responsibility. (**Exerting power without responsibility is abuse.**) Fulfillment of responsibilities results in greater feelings of power. Failure of responsibilities results in loss of power.

Responsibilities	Power
safety, health, growth, education	make decisions about preferences
consider consequences of behavior	equal input on allocation of resources
respect everyone	expect that requests will be considered respectfully
negotiate/cooperate	

When there are lapses in trust, some formula that is clear to you and to the child help to rebuild trust. The Plan for Increasing Trust on the following page can help.

Plan for Increasing Trust

Think of the level of trust you feel for your child right now. Indicate what you will need to see in your own emotions and behavior and in the emotions and behavior of your child to increase trust to the next level. That is, what will you need to feel and do and what will he/she need to do and feel to get to the next level?

Percentage of Trust	I will	He/She Will
10%	**Feel:** **Do:**	**Feel:** **Do:**
20%	**Feel:** **Do:**	**Feel:** **Do:**
30%	**Feel:** **Do:**	**Feel:** **Do:**
50%	**Feel:**	**Feel:**

	Do:	**Do:**
50%	**Feel:** **Do:**	**Feel:** **Do:**
70%	**Feel:** **Do:**	**Feel:** **Do:**
90%	**Feel:** **Do:**	**Feel:** **Do:**

The following table of power and consequences can help adolescents develop skill in the most successful form of impulse control: thinking through consequences of their behavior.

Power and *Consequences*

Behavior:	
Possible Consequences	**Likelihood** (in percentage)
Safety: 1. 2.	
Health/Growth: 1. 2.	
Education: 1. 2.	
Effects on others: 1. 2. 3.	

With the power equation (power = responsibility) firmly in place, teenagers are relieved of the unfair burden of trust to sustain an attachment bond from which nature relentlessly pulls them. When finally assured that they have a sense of self that not only withstands but flourishes in an atmosphere of attachment equality, they will again become worthy of trust. Reinvestment in attachment bonds with parents typically occurs in early adulthood, provided that the separation of adolescence is not an ongoing trauma heaped with guilt and shame and ensuing anger and resentment. The real issue of trust between parents and adolescents is that they can pass through these turbulent waters with their attachment bonds intact and ready for the gradual reinstatement of trust. Most do. But we can all make it less painful, without the false idol of trust rowing against a swift stream of self-doubt and hormones.

Appendix I

Post-test

Use the following scale to rate the depth and genuineness of your Core Self as Parent.

5 - deep, solid self-esteem
4 - mild self-esteem
3 - superficial or unrealistic self-esteem
2 - weakened self-esteem
1 - little self-esteem

I **learn** from my children	
I understand their experience of the world.	
I understand their emotional motivations.	
I understand my emotional responses to them.	
I understand my own emotional motivations.	
I **enjoy** my children	
I **value** my children	
I appreciate how important they are to my life.	
I appreciate how important I am to their lives.	
I teach them respect by respecting them.	
I **Guide** them	
I help them internalize encouragement to grow and learn.	
I help them use their awareness and intelligence for growth and development.	
I **empower** them	
I teach them emotional regulation.	
I teach them the power of compassion.	
I model emotional intelligence.	
I teach them values	
I give them the right and confidence to solve problems in *everyone's* best interest.	

I **Discipline** them	
I help them behave in their short *and* long term best interests.	
I help them develop self-discipline.	
I **Give Them Affection** (attachment behavior)	
I express appreciation and interest, through eye contact, cuddling, cooing, soothing, and hugging.	
I model affection with other adults.	
I **allow** them to be themselves	
I allow them to explore different aspects of themselves.	
I allow them to develop their fullest potential as individual human beings.	
TOTAL SCORE	

Compare your results on this test now with your score at the beginning, and reward yourself for your growth and wisdom.

Use the following scale to rate the depth and genuineness of your self-esteem in each of the designated areas crucial to parenting.

5 - deep, solid self-esteem
4 - mild self-esteem
3 - superficial or unrealistic self-esteem
2 - weakened self-esteem
1 - little self-esteem

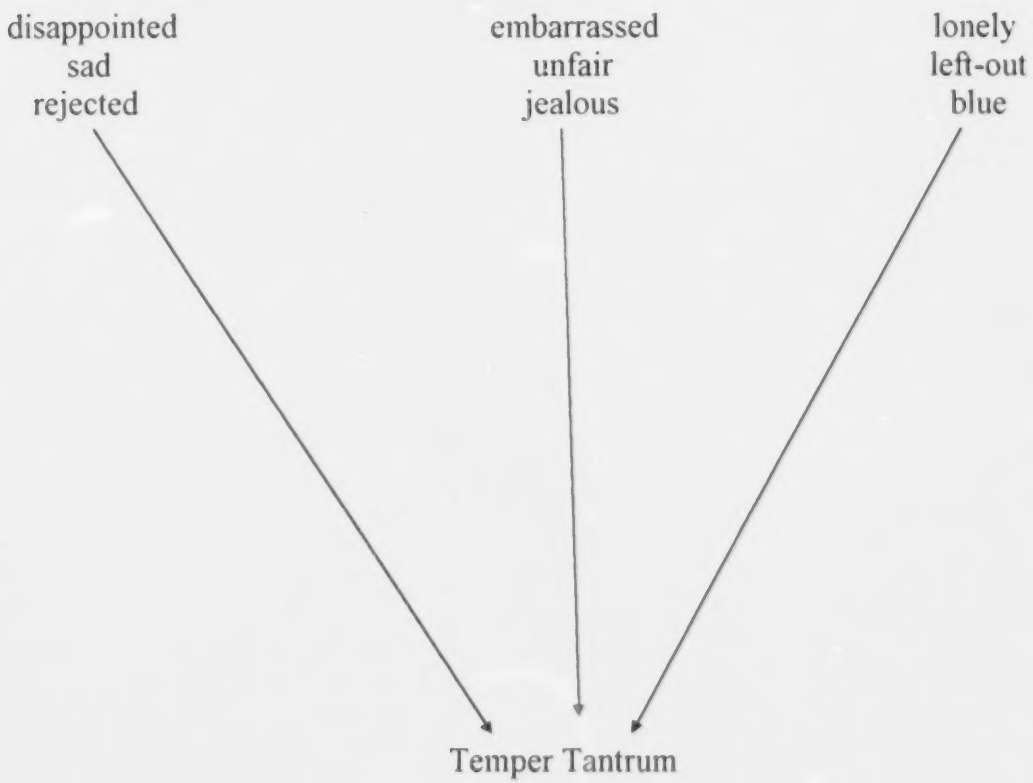
Depth of Self-Esteem	
Competence	
Creativity	
Growth (learning, acquiring skills, broadening, deepening appreciation)	
Healing/Nurturing (meeting physical and psychological needs of self)	
Healing/Nurturing (meeting physical/psychological needs of children)	
Respect for and value of children	
Self-Compassion (understanding, validating, and regulating deep internal experience of self)	
Compassion for loved ones (understanding and validating their deep internal experience, and supporting them for positive change)	
Empowerment of self	
Empowerment of loved ones	

Appendix II

Building Emotional Vocabulary in Children

Research has shown that children learn to regulate their emotions, to the elimination of temper tantrums and acting out behavior, when they are able to put vulnerable emotions into words. This evidence strongly suggests that thoughts and language provide the natural regulation of emotions. When the brain has no way to **label** or otherwise **discriminate** among the various meanings it gives to events and behaviors, it tends to funnel all emotional response into the form of arousal that gives the most temporary power: **anger**. With no developed skill to regulate the intense experience of anger, children lose control.

The following are a few of the vulnerable responses, which, unlabeled, children tend to funnel into temper-tantrums.



A Few General Rules for Teaching Emotional Vocabulary

To learn emotional vocabulary that will help build internal regulatory skill, the child must slowly verbalize the emotion:

"I...am...happy."

In the beginning, the child will simply repeat what you say. That's okay, *even mere repetition helps build self-regulatory skill.*

The emotion should be related to a specific recent behavior in which the child experienced the emotion you want to teach. For example, **if the child seemed to be happy recently while coloring or playing with a specific toy, use that behavior to describe the emotion.** It's also a good idea to make the emotion concrete by giving it a color. Allow the child to choose which color seems to fit the emotion - pointing at an array of crayons will do the trick.

Start with the positive emotions. Don't try to do too much at once. The purpose is to *empower* the child with a skill that he or she can do eventually without help.

Make the lesson a fun experience to which the child can look forward.

> "Tonight we're going to find ways to talk about emotions we have inside us. Do you know what I mean by emotions we have inside us? When you go out in the winter without a coat, you feel cold. That's an emotion that comes from *outside* you. Tonight, we'll talk about emotions that come from the inside."

Choose a time and place that afford you 15 minutes to a half-hour without interruption. Make the lesson seem like a special experience to the child.

The following are sample lessons for teaching children emotional vocabulary and regulatory process. In the examples we assume a young, slightly less than cooperative child.

Lesson 1: Happy, Light, Free

Parent: When you were coloring this morning, it seemed that you felt happy. Is that right?

Child: I don't know.

Parent: Try to remember what it was like when you were coloring.

Child: It was like coloring.

Parent: Is that like eating vegetables?

Child: No.

Parent: Did it feel real heavy, like something was pressing down on you so you could hardly move?

Child: No.

Parent: Not at all?

Child: No, the other way.

Parent: You mean like you could move around all you want?

Child: Yes.

Parent: So you felt light, which is the other way from heavy. Is that okay, did you feel light?"

Child: Yes.

Parent: Say, "I felt light." (Child repeats.) Did you also feel free, like you could do anything you wanted?

Child: Sort of.

Parent: So try saying this, "I felt happy." (Child repeats.) "I felt light and I felt free." Child repeats. It's fun saying these things, isn't it?

Child: A little.

Parent: What color does that remind you of, when you feel happy, light, and free?

Child: I don't know.
Parent: Point to one.

Child: This one.

Parent: Yellow?

Child: No, this one.

Parent: That one's called, gold.

Child: Yes.

Parent: So when you feel like this, kind of nice, like you felt when you were coloring, what can you call that emotion?

Child: I don' t know.

Parent: You can say, "I...am..."

Child: Happy?

Parent: But say, "I...am..."

Child: "I am happy."

Parent: What else can you call it? "I feel light?" (Child repeats.). "I feel free." (Child repeats). "I feel gold."

(Child repeats.) So look at all the ways you learned to talk about that emotion you had while you were coloring. "I felt...."

Child: "I felt happy."

Parent: "I felt..."

Child: "I felt light."

Parent: "I felt..."

Child: "I felt free."

Parent: "I felt..."

Child: "I felt gold."

Parent: You know what? I felt happy, light, free, and gold just talking about these things. How did you feel, talking about them?

Help the child draw a picture of how he or she feels when experiencing each of these emotions.

Guide the child's hand while he or she writes each of the new words in the form: "I am...

Lesson 2: Loving, Warm, Cozy, Open, Secure

(We'll just assume for now on that the child replies with lots of *I don't knows*.)

Parent: When you hugged me today I felt <u>loving</u>. That's how we feel when we show love for somebody. How did you feel when you hugged me?

Child: Loving.

Parent: "I felt loving."

Child: "I felt loving."

Parent: It made me feel warm inside. Did you feel warm inside?

Child: Yes.

Parent: "I felt warm."

Child: "I felt warm."

Parent: It made me feel cozy. That means I just wanted to snuggle and be close and cozy. I was all warm and cozy when you hugged me. Did you feel that way?

Child: Yes.

Parent: "I felt cozy."

Child: "I felt cozy."

Parent: I felt open, like I could hug you and you would hug me back and I could hug you back. "I felt open."

Child: "I felt open."

Parent: I felt secure. "Secure" means that you feel safe and that you'll only do good things. Did you feel safe and like you would only do good things?

Child: Yes.

Parent: "I felt secure."

Child: "I felt secure."

Parent: What color do these emotions remind you of? (Child points to a color, say, red.) So what words did we learn for that nice emotion we both felt when you hugged me? "I felt..."

Child: "I felt loving. I felt warm. I felt cozy. I felt open. I felt secure. I felt red."

Help the child draw a picture of how he or she feels when experiencing each of these emotions.

Guide the child's hand while he/she writes each of the new words in the form: "I am...

Lesson 3: Pride, Happy-to-be-Me

Parent: How did you feel when you drew that picture today?

Child: I don't know. Happy, I guess.

Parent: Yes, you seemed to be happy.

Child: And light.

Parent: Yes. But this was a different kind of happy and light and-

Child: And free and gold.

Parent: Yes, but there seemed to be something else. How did you feel when you finished the picture, besides happy and light and free and gold?

Child: I don't know.

Parent: Did you want to show it, or did you just want to keep it to yourself?

Child: I wanted to show it.

Parent: That emotion you had that made you want to show it is called pride. "I felt pride."

Child: "I felt pride."

Parent: Now *why* did you want to show it?

Child: Cause I wanted you to see it.

Parent: Because of what I would say or what I would feel?

Child: Both.

Parent: Good. That's two different kinds of pride. The first one was that you knew I would say how good it was, and that would make you feel pride in what you did.

Child: Yes.

Parent: The second kind of pride is that you wanted me to feel something. What did you want me to feel?

Child: I wanted you to feel pride too.

Parent: So you wanted me to share the good emotion of pride that you felt?

Child: Yes.

Parent: So you see, emotion pride is a special kind of happy. In a way, it makes you happy to be you. Is that right?

Child: Yeah.

Parent: "I'm happy to be me."

Child: "I'm happy to be me."

Parent: That's a real deep emotion. It starts deep inside and spreads all over your body so that you feel happy to be you all over.

Child: Yeah.

Parent: But what if you did something that you weren't satisfied with, so that you didn't feel pride in doing it?

Child: Like when I broke the lamp?

Parent: Yes. That's the outside thing you did that didn't make you feel pride. But what about the inside, what was the emotion about yourself?

Child: Wouldn't that break too?

Parent: No. That can't break. It's like the crayon doesn't break just because it draws a bad picture. Cause that same crayon can draw a good picture the next time. Does that make sense to you?

Child: Yes.

Parent: So you're always happy to be you, even when you make mistakes. Would you say that? "I'm always happy to be me even when I make mistakes." (Child repeats.) What color does that remind you of?

Child: Something bright. (points to a crayon).

Parent: That's pink.

Child: I feel pink.

Parent: So let's say our two new words for this real special kind of happy. "I feel pride."

Child: "I feel pride."

Parent: "I'm happy to be me."

Child: "I'm happy to be me."

Parent: "I feel pink."

Child: "I feel pink."

Help the child draw a picture of how he or she feels when experiencing each of these emotions.

Guide the child's hand while he or she writes each of the new words in the form: "I am...

Lesson 4: Lonely, Left-Out, Blue

Parent: Do you ever sometimes feel like playing with other kids, and they don't understand or don't invite you to play with them?

Child: Yeah, once.

Parent: What was that emotion like?

Child: I don't know.

Parent: Did you feel like you wanted to play and have fun with them?

Child: Yes.

Parent: But they were leaving you out?

Child: Yes.

Parent: That's called emotion left out. Most people feel that now and then. "I felt left out."

Child: "I felt left out."

Parent: What did you do then?

Child: I went away and played with Frankie.

Parent: But how did you feel after you left those other kids and before you found Frankie?

Child: I was by myself.

Parent: You were *alone*. You know what it's called when we're alone but we don't want to be, when we'd rather be with someone else? It's called emotion lonely.

Child: What about if I'm alone and I don't want to be with anyone else?

Parent: Everyone feels that way sometimes. That's not emotion lonely; it's just wanting some time alone. Lonely is when you're alone but would rather be with someone else. Is that what you felt when you left those other kids and went to find Frankie?

Child: Yes.

Parent: "I felt lonely."

Child: "I felt lonely."

Parent: What color does that emotion remind you of? (Child points to a crayon.) That's blue.

Child: "I felt blue."

Parent: So what are the new words to call those emotions?

Child: "I felt blue."

Parent: What were the others?

Child: "I felt lonely."

Parent: What was the other one?"

Child: I don't remember.

Parent: "I felt left-out."

Child: "I felt left-out."

Help the child draw a picture of how he or she feels when experiencing each of these emotions.

Guide the child's hand while he or she writes each of the new words in the form: "I am...

Lesson 5: Disappointed, Sad, Rejected

Parent: I want to talk about how you felt when we were in the grocery store yesterday.

Child: I don't want to talk about that.

Parent: I know you don't. But we need to talk about it so you can learn to do things that will make you feel better. This isn't punishment, I'm not going to blame you, I just want to see what happened that made you get so upset.

Child: I'll feel bad if we talk about it.

Parent: We'll concentrate on making you feel powerful enough to keep it from happening again. Then you won't feel bad. Okay? Can we try it?

Child: Okay.

Parent: How did you feel just before you got upset?

Child: I don't remember.

Parent: You know how it looked to me?

Child: No.

Parent: It looked like you felt disappointed.

Child: What does that mean?

Parent: It's how we feel when we want something and don't get it. Like you really wanted that bubble gum, remember?

Child: And you wouldn't let me have it.

Parent: Right. When we want something and can't have it, we feel disappointed. Say, "I felt disappointed."

Child: "I felt disappointed."

Parent: Emotion disappointed isn't all that bad, is it?"

Child: It was yesterday.

Parent: You would rather not talk about this right now, would you?

Child: Not really.

Parent: You're not getting what you want - which is doing something else - and your emotion is a little disappointed, right?

Child: I guess.

Parent: But that's not as bad as yesterday in the grocery store. What do you think is the difference?

Child: I was upset.

Parent: The disappointment you felt caused the upset. So what was different about the disappointment you felt yesterday, that caused you to get upset, and the disappointment you feel right now when you're not upset?

Child: It's not as bad right now.

Parent: For one thing, you can say, "I feel disappointed." That calms you down, so you don't get so upset. Say, "I feel disappointed." (Child repeats.) Do you feel a little more like you control the disappointment?

Child: A little.

Parent: Now what if you had said that yesterday?

Child: I guess it might've been better.

Parent: We need to practice it so we can get better.

Child: Yeah.

Parent: "I feel disappointed." (Child repeats.) But you're looking like this isn't all there is to it.

Child: I don't know.

Parent: Yesterday in the grocery store, it wasn't just that you felt disappointed. You know how I felt when I saw that you were disappointed?

Child: You were mad?

Parent: No, I wasn't mad. I was sad. When I thought that you were disappointed, I felt sad. Do you think you felt a little sad, too?

Child: Yes.

Parent: What was that like?

Child: I don't know.

Parent. Did you think maybe I was mad at you, or I didn't like you or didn't want you, while you felt disappointed?

Child: You didn't want me when I was carrying on.

Parent: I wanted you, I just didn't want you to do that behavior. People are different from their behavior. You are always a great, lovable kid. But, like everybody else, sometimes you make mistakes and do things that other people don't want you to do, like carry on in the grocery store. Then you try to learn from the mistake, so you don't make it again.

Child: What if I do make it again?

Parent: You try harder not to make it again. Eventually you learn. But even if you do make the mistake, I still want you. I always want you. Now we need to have a word for that emotion, so when you have it, you can ask about it. The word for what we feel when we think people don't want us, is rejected. "I feel rejected."

Child: "I feel rejected."

Parent: If you could have said that yesterday, "I feel rejected," I could have said that I'm not rejecting you. I just didn't want you to have the gum. You're far more important than gum. Do you understand that?

Child: Sort of.

Parent: Just because you can't have gum, doesn't mean that you're rejected and that you're not important. Say this: "Just because I can't have gum, or can't have everything I want, doesn't mean that I'm rejected, or that I'm not important, or that I'm not a great kid." (Child repeats.) Now try to think of how you felt in the grocery store after I said you couldn't have bubble gum. First you were disappointed, then sad, then, because you were sad, it made you feel like I didn't want you, and you felt rejected. Then, cause it feels so bad to feel rejected, you got angry and started doing all that stuff you don't really like doing. Does that sound like what happened? (Child nods.) So here's what we do when that happens again. I say that you can't have the bubble gum. What do you say?"

Child: I don't know.

Parent: How did not having the bubble gum make you feel?

Child: "I felt disappointed."

Parent: That's right that's what you say.

Child: What will you say?

Parent: I'll say that I'm sorry you feel disappointed. And I'll say that you can manage the emotion of disappointment.

Child: Then I'll feel sad.

Parent: Why? Because you can't have the gum, or because I want you to manage the disappointment?

Child: Both.

Parent: Does it seem that I'm rejecting you, because I won't do anything about your disappointment or your sadness?

Child: Yes.

Parent: Do you remember a few months ago when Kelly was learning to ride her bike?

Child: Yes.

Parent: Remember how I would hold the back of it and walk real fast beside her when she was first learning?

Child: Yes.

Parent: But after a while I let her do it on her own.

Child: Yes.

Parent: Cause I care about her and I want her to learn to ride her bike on her own. Do you understand that?

Child: Cause she wouldn't always want you to hold it for her.

Parent: Right. So why do you think I want you to manage your own disappointment and sadness?

Child: So I'll learn to do it on my own?

Parent: That's right!

Child: You want me to learn it, and that means you care about me.

Parent: So what could you have said to yourself - or to me - at the grocery store, when you couldn't have the gum? (Child hesitates.) Think of how you wanted the gum, but I wouldn't let you have it. What did we call that emotion?

Child: "I felt disappointed."

Parent: Anything else?

Child: Then "I felt sad."

Parent: Did the sadness mean I didn't care about you?

Child: No.

Parent: Does it ever mean that?

Child: No.

Parent: Now how can you make yourself feel happy, without the bubble gum?

Child: "I feel happy!"

Parent: Great! And how does that make you feel about yourself?

Child: "I feel pride." And, "I feel happy to be me."

Parent: And I feel so proud of you! Now here's something else you can say to yourself to feel better. Try saying, "I feel disappointed, but I'm **okay**."

Child: "I feel disappointed, but I'm okay."

Parent: "Try it again."

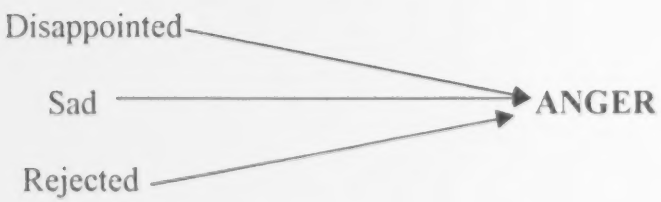
Child: **"I feel disappointed, but I'm okay."**

Parent: Let's say it together.

Parent and Child: "I feel disappointed, but I'm okay!"

Lesson 6: Disappointed, Sad, Rejected = Anger

Parent: We've been learning a lot about emotions lately. We've learned how you can control them and how you can change emotions you don't like into emotions that you do like. Now we're going to make a little chart for the emotion of anger. (Later we'll make a chart of what we can do to make these emotions into more pleasant ones.) When we feel angry, it means that we're emotion some kind of hurt. If we don't heal the hurt, the anger can get out of control.



Parent: We can feel anger when we feel disappointed. But most of the time, for there to be anger, the disappointment has to make us sad. And for there to be a lot of anger, we have to feel rejected. So what do we have to say when we feel angry?

Child: "I feel angry."

Parent: That's right. But what else are you emotion when you feel angry? What is the anger covering up?

Child: "I feel disappointed."

Parent: That's right. Can you choose a color for disappointment? (Child chooses purple.) "I feel purple."

Child: "I feel purple."

Parent: When you feel disappointed, when you feel purple, there's something you can say to make yourself feel better.

Child: What's that?

Parent: You can say, "I might want this, but I don't need it to be happy."

Child: "I might want this, but I don't need it to be happy."

Parent: Good. What else do you feel just before you get angry?

Child: I don't know.

Parent: Look on the chart.

Child: "I feel sad."

Parent: Can you choose a color for sad? (Child chooses brown.) "I feel brown."

Child: "I feel brown."

Parent: There's something you can say to yourself when you feel sad to make you feel better.

Child: What.

Parent: You can say, "I feel happy!"

Child: "I feel happy!"

Parent: It makes you feel a little happy just saying it, doesn't it?

Child. A little.

Parent: What other emotion can make you feel angry?

Child: "I feel rejected."

Parent: Do you have a color for that emotion?

Child: No, that one doesn't have a color.

Parent: That's okay. When you feel rejected you can say, "I feel without any color."

Child: "I feel without any color."

Parent: And here's what you can say to make that emotion better. "I care about Mom and Dad, and they care about me."

Child: "I care about Mom and Dad, they care about me."

Parent: Aren't you still happy to be you?

Child: "I feel happy to be me."

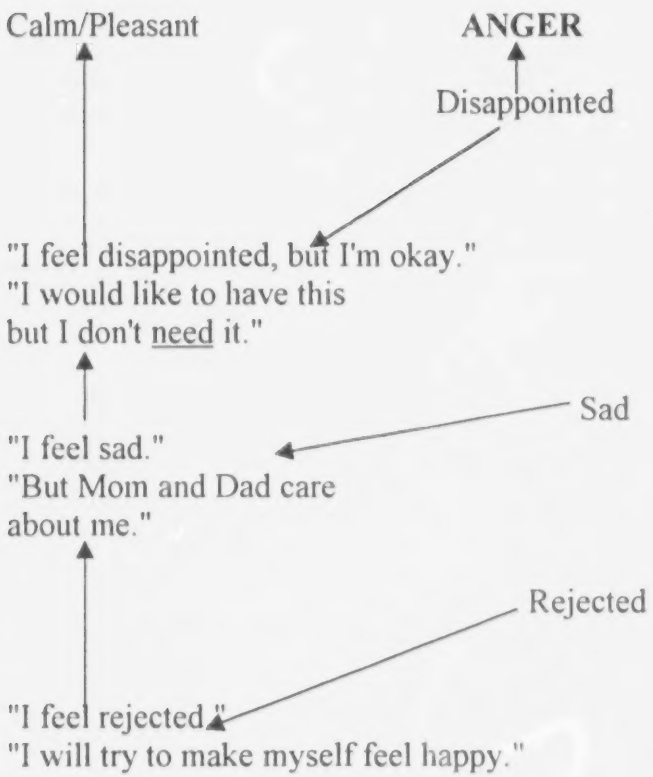
Parent: What else?

Child: "I feel pride."

Parent: What else?

Child: "I feel gold." And, "I feel happy."

Parent: Let's make a chart now with what we can do when we have these emotions.



Lesson 7: Embarrassed, Unfair, Jealous = Anger

Parent: Last time, we talked about the emotions that make us angry. Do you remember them?

Child: "I feel disappointed, I feel sad, I feel rejected."

Parent: Good! It's wonderful that you remember them. But that's not all the emotions that cause anger. There's a few more.

Child: What are they?

Parent: Remember that day in the grocery store, when you wanted the bubble gum?

Child: Yes.

Parent: I made a mistake then that only helped you to get more angry.

Child: What was it?

Parent: Do you remember when I said that people in the store were watching you act out?

Child: Yes.

Parent: How did you feel then, to know that people were watching you?

Child: I knew it anyway.

Parent: How did you feel?

Child: Bad.

Parent: Cause you didn't want them to see you like that?

Child: Yes.

Parent: That emotion is called embarrassed. When we think people are thinking bad things about us, we feel embarrassed.

Child: But I got angrier.

Parent: When we don't know how to say, "I feel embarrassed," which is the start of making ourselves feel better, the embarrassment will most of the time make us angrier.

Child: "I feel embarrassed." And that means people are thinking bad things about me?

Parent: No, most of the time they're not really thinking bad things about you. It just seems that way cause you're emotion bad. What color do you want to give that emotion of embarrassment?

Child: Not really a color. This one, but like this. (Child takes a black crayon and draws harsh stripes.)

Parent: Okay, that's black stripes. "I feel black stripes."

Child: I feel black stripes."

Parent: What can you do about that bad emotion?

Child: I don't know.

Parent: For one thing, you can say, "I feel embarrassed."

Child: "I feel embarrassed." And, "I feel black stripes."

Parent: Great! Then you can change the idea you have that people are thinking bad things about you.

Child: How do I do that?

Parent: Help them think good things about you. How could you have done that in the grocery store?

Child: Say, "I feel embarrassed?"

Parent: Yes, but what else?

Child: Stop making noise?

Parent: Yes, but it's hard to stop doing things. It's much easier to do something instead of what you don't want to do. Like you could have said, "I feel embarrassed," taken a deep breath, and asked me what was next on our shopping list.

Child: Then what?

Parent: Then we could have gotten the next thing on the list and you would have felt better.

Child: That's easy.

Parent: Well, not quite that easy. Cause there was one more thing that happened in the grocery store that helped get you so angry.

Child: What was that?

Parent: Did you really want that bubble gum a lot?

Child: Yeah.

Parent: I can't remember you asking for bubble gum more than one other time. Can you?

Child: It sticks in my mouth.

Parent: You don't really like it, do you?

Child: Not much.

Parent: So how do you think it got to be so important just then?

Child: I don't know.

Parent: Maybe because Kelly had just gotten the mints she likes and put them in the cart?

Child: It wasn't fair.

Parent: I know it felt that way. So that's what you need to say. I feel this is unfair."

Child: "I feel this is unfair."

Parent: What color could go with the emotion that things are unfair?

Child: This. (Child scribbles with the black crayon.)

Parent: Okay, that feels like black scribbles.

Child: "I feel black scribbles."

Parent: If you could have told me that you felt it was unfair, or "black scribbles", then I could have explained to you what I was thinking, so you wouldn't feel it was unfair. I thought that you didn't really want the bubble gum, not like she wanted the mints. I thought you didn't really like bubble gum, you just wanted it because she was getting something.

Child: I did.

Parent: But how could you get angry for not getting something you didn't really want?

Child: I don't know.

Parent: Did you think that I let her have the mints because I like her more than you?

Child: Yes.

Parent: When you feel that someone you love loves somebody else more than you, that emotion is called jealousy. "I feel jealous."

Child: "I feel jealous." I know what color that is. (Child takes the green crayon.) "I feel green."

Parent: The problem with jealousy is that, before we can figure it out, it turns into anger. So we need to say, "I feel jealous." And then think about the emotion. Do you really think that I love Kelly more than you?

Child: No.

Parent: So what you need to do is slow down your emotions when you're having that jealous emotion. Then you can change it, by deciding whether or not it's true. "I feel jealous. Does Mom really love Kelly more than me? No. Do I love Kelly? Yes."

Child: "I feel jealous...."

Parent: "Do I really think that Mom loves Kelly more than me?"

Child: "Do I really think that Mom loves Kelly more than me? No, I don't."

Parent: "Do I love Kelly?"

Child: "Do I love Kelly? Yes."

Parent: Do you feel jealous now?

Child: No.

Parent: I'm so proud of you! So let's look at this graph and how you can control it and not have it turn into anger.

Appendix III

My Good Heart: Notes for Caregivers

The drawing book, *My Good Heart*, reinforces the Core Value of children ages 6-12. Core personal value forms the foundation of self-esteem, competence, creativity, achievement, self-care, and compassion.

The Good Heart concept helps children build internal regulatory processes to prevent the experience of disappointment, anxiety, sadness, and anger from devaluing their sense of self. It helps them learn compassion for themselves and for others. It can also function as a reward system to counteract the impulse to take things from others, do forbidden behaviors, or to exert power over others. It can serve as a reminder at time outs or in other reprimands for misbehavior. Care givers can reinforce the power of the Good Heart by saying something like:

"Okay, you made a mistake, you need to get in touch with your Good Heart to make it better."

"You did a great job turning up your Good Heart! But do you need to apologize?"

"You did so well to apologize for misbehaving. Feel your Good Heart glowing more brightly than ever!"

Children become firmly in touch with their own Core Value when encouraged to look for value in other people, even difficult people.

"Way to go! You recognized the Good Heart of another person!"

Children will want to know about other children misbehaving or adults doing cruel things. Emphasize that misbehaving children and cruel adults are not devoid of a Good Heart. Rather, they are merely out of touch with it. This same thought, incorporated into the normal safety precautions for children, can be expressed as:

"Because some people are out of touch with their Good Hearts, you need to be careful not to talk to strangers."

Appendix IV

Power and Emotional Intelligence: Behaving in Your Best Interests

Behaving in your "best interests" means doing what will most likely prove best for you.

Behaving in your **short-term** best interests means doing what you prefer to do right now.

Your long-term best interests are met by doing whatever helps you:

- Grow and stay healthy;
- Do things you're **proud** of;
- Do whatever you do better than the last time you did it.

How do I prefer to invest my interest and enjoyment right now?

- Playing outside
- Cooperating (doing chores and other things expected of me)
- Watching TV
- Learning about myself and my emotions
- Doing homework
- Playing computer games
- Learning about other people and their emotions
- Other _____

Three Questions of Power and Emotional Intelligence

Is it in my long-term best interest to do my preference right now or later?

How much time do I need to spend on my long-term best interest right now in order to get my preference later?

If I do my preference right now, how much time will I need to spend on my long-term best interest later?

Appendix V

Emotional Regulation for Adolescents

Value

- Value is the importance and significance we give to persons and things.

- The need to value is universal in human beings; people from all cultures seek multiple levels of value in their lives.

- Value gives our lives meaning and purpose and fills us with strength, courage, spirit, and morale. Living with little value is empty, dull, and uncreative. Living with high value gives us the ability to sense beauty, behave morally, and to love.

- The following are a few of the persons and things that most people value:
  - children
  - parents
  - intimates
  - friends
  - special teachers
  - fairness and honesty
  - goals
  - certain behaviors and activities
  - certain beliefs
  - a lifestyle (clothes, food, recreation, music)
  - nature
  - art
  - some notion of God.

The Laws of Value

III. The more value we give to a person or thing, the more interest and meaning we have in our lives.

IV. We are each in charge of how we invest value.

Core Value

- Core Value is the human capacity to **create** value. All the value we create in life comes from Core Value.

- Core Value is always *far more* than the mere sum of values. It includes the **value of *you***, the psychological equivalent of the human soul. At its deepest and most profound, it helps you value God or Nature or the Universe.

- Core Value is a psychological state, a place deep within yourself where you know your own humanity, your capacity to value yourself *while* valuing others.

- The greater your Core Value the more depth to your value of self and others. The more depth to your value of self and others, the greater your Core Value.

- A clear awareness that no problem, behavior, or event can reduce your value as a person, Core Value tells you that you're *okay*, even if certain behavior may need to change. You have the strength to change perspectives and any behavior not in your best interests.

- Core Value has two psychological functions:

- Stop negative emotions, with their built-in motivation to devalue the self or others.
- Convert the negative to positive, with motivation to value the self and others.

- Although it can seem temporarily diminished, Core Value is *invincible* to damage from the outside world. The world can hurt your feelings and body but *never* your Core Value.

- **When in touch with Core Value, you cannot do wrong.**

- We can access Core Value in the midst of negative emotion through the sheer ***will*** to activate it, the will to feel humane, to value the self and others.

- There are many ways to access Core Value. You can begin by saying, "I want to value my own positive emotions and I want to value other people."

Examples:

  - If the negative emotion is quiet, sadness, loneliness, or disappointment, the experience of Core Value might be quiet or peaceful.

  - For intense negative emotion, like anger, anxiety, or distress:
    - Identify the hurt causing you to *de*value yourself or others.
    - Say, "I want to value my own positive emotions and I want to value other people."
    - Core Value can begin like a rush, a thousand specks of warm light surging through your body.

- The light of Core Value outshines the shadows of pain, replacing it with well being, soothing, comfort, euphoria, excitement, or elation, a state of grace. You have strong motivation to **heal**, **correct**, and **improve**.

Statement of Core Value

I am worthy of respect, value, and compassion, whether or not I get them from others. If I don't get them from others, it is necessary to feel <u>more</u> worthy, not <u>less</u>. It is necessary to affirm my own deep value as a unique person (a child of God). I respect and value myself. I have compassion for

my hurt. I have compassion for the hurt of others. I trust myself to act in my best interests and in the best interests of loved ones.

Find Your Core Value Image

Core Value is so deep and early an experience that it cannot be fully expressed in words. Rather, internal **images** activate Core Value. The primary image of Core Value is a deep, bright, warm, light.

Other images of Core Value can seem realistic, like an accelerated sunrise piercing the dark night and beautifully illuminating the world. Or they can seem abstract, like shimmering colors in swirling patterns. They can have sound, like birds chirping at dawn. They can have motion, like a sense of movement through color and space. They can have warmth and light or seem cool and dim. They can excite you or calm you, relax or focus you. Your Core Value images *must* come from deep inside you and produce soothing, comfort, and morale or excitement and elation.

Examples of Core Value Images:

- **ocean waves, heat of sun**
- **birds chirping at dawn**
- **solid marble with "important, valuable, worthy, equal" written on it**

Reconnect to Core Value at Least 12 Times Per Day

The ultimate goal is to stay connected to Core Value all the time. In the beginning, you will need to remember to invoke Core Value. Have certain places that automatically remind you. The bedroom and car are good places to start. Whenever you go into your bedroom, whenever you get into the car, connect to your Core Value, your undeniable source of morale and the spirit to go on.

It is important to connect to Core Value when you do not really need to, so it will become easier to make connection when you most *need* it.

Core Hurts: The Cause of
Anger, Anxiety, Resentment, Obsessions, Bad Behavior

When disconnected from Core Value we suffer core hurts. Core Value is the truth about the self. Core hurts are lies we come to believe about ourselves. Core value motivates behavior that promotes growth and development; core hurts motivate behavior harmful to the self or others. Core hurts separate us from Core Value.

Core Hurts

disregarded
unimportant
accused/guilty
devalued/disrespected
rejected
powerless
inadequate, unlovable

*H*EALS: Regulating Core Hurts to Access Core Value

Goal of Practicing *H*EALS:

Build a ***Skill*** the Brain Uses ***Automatically***
(in a ***fraction*** of a second) to Reach
Core Value when Aroused with
Anger, Anxiety, or Obsessions

To practice HEALS, you must:

- recall a time in the past when you felt disregarded, ignored, accused, guilty, devalued, disrespected, lied to, or betrayed;
- imagine it in enough detail to get the physiological arousal the event provoked to about five to ten percent of its actual level;
- begin the steps of the regulation.

Practice *H*EALS at least *12* times per *day*, recalling a time when you felt disregarded, ignored, accused, guilty, devalued or disrespected, lied to or betrayed.

It takes an average of **six weeks** of **12 repetitions per day,** ***associated*** with *imagined* or *recalled* **anger** or **anxiety** arousal, for the skill to become ***automatic***.

How and Where to Practice *H*EALS

Practice on mild arousal incidents at first, then work up to the hard ones. With increasing repetitions, you develop the skill to regulate more intense arousal.

Carry your copy of the steps of *H*EALS everywhere you go.

One good place to practice *H*EALS is in front of the mirror. Observe your eyes, the color and muscle tone in your face.

Another good place to practice is in the car. Many people put the steps of *H*EALS on a small card and keep a copy in their visor.

Practice while waiting in line or in a waiting room.

There are no bad times or places to practice ***H*EALS**.

Steps of *H*EALS

HEALS has five steps, three within yourself and two outside yourself.

1. **"*HEALS*" flashes and sounds 3-4 times in your imagination**
2. **Explain to yourself the deepest core hurt**
3. **Access your Core Value**
4. **Love yourself by acknowledging your humanity: compassion**
5. **Solve the problem**

It is crucial that we practice *H*EALS when at least a little bit aroused with one of the dozens of forms of anger.

To practice HEALS, recall a time when someone: **ignored** you, **disregarded** you, **pressured, manipulated,** or **tried to control** you. Or think of when someone **disrespected** you, **made fun** of you, **threatened** you, **lied** to you, or **betrayed** you.

Take a few seconds to imagine the scene as vividly as you can. Think of what you felt like. Pretend that it's happening now. Feel the feelings. It's happening now…

FEEL it tense in your:
neck
jaw
eyes
shoulders
chest
hands.

It's happening *now*!

It isn't fair!
Here we go again!
It'll never stop!
They always do this!
I can't stand it!

Push yourself to feel revenge impulse. **They can't do this to me!**

Now "**HEALS**" flash in your imagination. Feel yourself relax.
HEALS...HEALS...HEALS....

Explain to yourself the deepest of the core hurts causing the anger.

"I am powerless, I am unlovable."

Have the **courage** to deeply feel, for just a second, what it's like to **be** that core hurt.
Feel what it's like to be completely powerless and unworthy.
"I'm a puppet on a string. They control everything I think, feel, and do."
"No one could ever pay attention to my opinions or feelings. No one could love the ***real*** me."

Now have the greater courage to go deeper. Access your **Core Value**. Go deeply enough to feel your humanity, your gift from God. You have the ***power*** to act in your best interest regardless of what anyone else does. You are ***valuable, lovable,*** and ***equal to everyone on earth.***

Feel your deepest image of Core Value.

"I'm okay, even if behavior needs to change."

Feel your Core Value grow.

"I'm powerful enough to change my thoughts, feelings, and behavior."

Now **love yourself.** Prove, beyond a doubt, how **powerful** and **worthy** you are; feel **compassion** for the person who offended you. Feel sympathy, not for the behavior, but for the **core hurt** that caused it. You know how bad the core hurt feels, cause just felt it. Recognize their Core Value, and yours will soar. Then they might find the strength to change bad behavior.

Now solve the problem in your best interest. Will you solve it better with anger, anxiety, resentment, depression, aggression, drinking, drugging, avoiding, or with compassion? Which do you prefer? Which feels more powerful, symptoms and defenses, or compassion?

Each time you practice HEALS, you gain a little more of your inner self. You become wiser, more powerful, and better able to understand yourself and others.

Directions for feeling the identified core hurt in the "Explain to Yourself" step of *H*EALS

Note: Always go to the deepest of the core hurts. *H*EALS may not work if you do not go low enough. If feeling rejected and you identify feeling "unimportant," your response will not reach deeply enough. However, *H*EALS will work if you go "too low." If feeling unimportant, and you identify "unlovable," regulation will still occur.

Disregarded: Feel what it's like to feel unworthy of regard, not to count enough for anyone to pay attention to your opinions, desires, and feelings.

Unimportant: Feel what it's like to be totally unimportant, not to matter at all, to be so unimportant that no one should consider having a passing positive thought about you.

Accused/Guilty: Feel what it is like to have done something wrong, to have hurt someone, to have done terrible damage, to have betrayed someone, to have been immoral. **Accused/Untrustworthy**: Feel what it's like to be unworthy of trust. No one can or should trust you. You are incapable of being trusted.

Accused/Distrusted: Feel what it's like to be accused and distrusted. No matter how well you do, how innocent you are, how moral you are, you will not be trusted.

Devalued: Feel what it's like to be totally without value as a person. You are worthless.

Rejected: Feel what it's like to be completely unacceptable, to be banished, put down, thrown out, and abandoned.

Powerless: Feel what it's like to be completely without power over your internal experience, to be out of control of your thoughts, your feelings, and your behavior. You're like a puppet on a string or a robot whose buttons anyone can push. Anybody can make you think, feel, and do anything they want.

Unlovable: Feel what it's like to be unworthy of love. No one could love you. No one could love the real you. No one ever will.

Each of these feelings brings intense discomfort. The healing of self-compassion must quickly relieve them. With the application of self-compassion, you deeply understand that the behavior of another person or the occurrence of any event outside you can have no valid meaning about the self. You are worthy of regard, important, above accusation, valuable, acceptable, powerful, and lovable. Your compassion for others will prove it to you.

Trouble with *H*EALS

1. Go deeper on the core hurt list. Don't be afraid to feel "unfit for human contact," even if it seems worse than the core hurt you actually felt. The worse the core hurt the easier it becomes to reactivate Core Value.

2. Try to get as close as you can to feeling the deepest core hurt for one second.

3. If you have trouble making the transition to applying self-compassion or accessing Core Value, try rapid eye movement for a few seconds. Focus

your eyes on your finger and move it rapidly back and forth a few seconds.

4. In the "Apply self-compassion" step, deeply appreciate that, no matter what the trigger incident, you do not deserve to continue feeling core hurts. Continuing to feel core hurts impedes your ability to make things better.

5. In the "Love yourself" step, recognize the Core Value of the person who offended you. He/she is far more complicated, complex, and humane than what they did to you. By realizing their complexity and humanity, you reinforce your own.

6. In the "Love yourself" step, identify the other person's core hurt that caused the behavior you don't like. (It will almost always be the same one you felt.) Feel compassion, not for the behavior, but for the hurt. Compassion for the hurt focuses on the cause and points out that the behavior cannot be supported if it makes the core hurt worse. Your compassion will activate self-compassion of the other almost as quickly as your anger will escalate anger in the other.

Appendix VI

Do's and Don'ts of Compassionate Parenting

Modeling
Solution finding • *do* stay focused on solutions *don't* blame • *do* ask questions that elicit solutions from the child *don't* solve the problem or offer unsolicited advice • *do* encourage the child to consider alternative solutions *don't* imply that there is only one right way to solve problems • *do* encourage brainstorming of possible solutions *don't* dismiss the child's ideas **Responsibility** • *do* keep your commitments *don't* break promises • *do* consider the feelings of others *don't* act like the "Lord and Master" • *do* pick up after yourself *don't* make others wait on you • *do* hold morals above convenience *don't* justify your incorrect behavior • *do* be authoritative *don't* be authoritarian • *do* admit to being unsure *don't* pretend to know it all • *do* be truthful and honest *don't* be phony, lie, or cheat • *do* show that power includes responsibility *don't* exert power arbitrarily

Respect

- *do* treat everyone with respect
  don't ridicule anyone

- *do* let the child speak for herself
  don't speak for the child

- *do* listen
  don't interrupt

- *do* reflect
  don't react

- *do* focus on uniqueness of each child
  don't compare the child to other children

- *do* talk
  don't yell, scream, or lecture

- *do* let the child have his own childhood
  don't use your childhood as a standard

- *do* validate the child's feelings (acknowledge the child's right to have them)
  don't invalidate the child's feelings (tell him what he really feels or what she doesn't have the right to feel)

Regulation of impulses, emotions

- *do* ask the child to list the consequences of acting on impulse
  don't lecture or moralize about consequences

- *do* show compassion for self and others
  don't blame or put down self and others

- *do* take child's perspective and compare it with your own
  don't get locked in your own perspective

- *do* express deeper feelings
  don't express symptoms/defenses, e.g., shaming anger, anxiety, obsessions

- *do* be flexible
  don't be rigid

Guidance/Discipline

- *do* empower the child
  don't engage in power struggles

- *do* praise specific effort
  don't praise the child

- *do* express problems accurately
  don't exaggerate or minimize

- *do* teach the child how to *do* better
  don't shame or humiliate the child

- *do* set limits
  don't hit or spank

- *do* criticize specific behavior at specific times
  don't criticize or label the child (lazy, dumb, liar, etc.)

- *do* discipline specific behavior
  don't discipline a "bad boy/girl"

- *do* respectfully ask how the child can prevent the mistake in the future
  don't threaten or punish

- *do* withhold rewards or privileges
  don't withdraw affection or threaten abandonment

- *do* let the child learn
  don't intervene too soon

- *do* enhance to the child's strengths
  don't focus on the child's weaknesses

- *do* respectfully confront
  don't avoid

- *do* attend to positive behavior
  don't reinforce negative behavior with attention

- *do* allow your child to make choices within parameters acceptable to you
  don't sweat the small stuff or try to control everything

Instilling Optimism

- *do* enjoy the child
  don't imply that the child is a burden

- *do* learn from the child
  don't assume you know it all

- *do* play
  don't tease (at the child's expense)
- *do* teach the Core Value of self and others
  don't imply that the child is inferior or superior to others

- *do* teach that mistakes are temporary, due to situation or particular effort, and usually correctable
  don't imply that mistakes are permanent, due to personality, or irrevocable

- *do* teach that some clearly defined tasks are negotiable and that cooperation is fun and productive
- *don't* imply that all tasks and instructions are carved in stone and that cooperation is work, punishment, or weakness

- *do* laugh with the child
  don't take everything seriously

- *do* kiss the child goodnight
  don't send the child to bed in anger

- *do* sit with the child at meals
  don't ignore the child while eating

- *do* take walks together
  don't always say, "go out and play"

- *do* show pleasure to see the child after school
  don't ignore child's homecoming or immediately discipline or make assignments

- *do* hug the child a minimum of six times per day
  don't be afraid to touch or "spoil" the child

- *do* smile at the child frequently
  don't frown

- *do* make eye contact

don't glare

- *do* be friendly, warm
  don't seem aloof, closed, distant

- *do* speak softly
  don't sound loud, hostile, sarcastic

- *do* relax
  don't be tense, compulsive, or a perfectionist

Appendix VII

Family Empowerment Agreement

We hereby agree that our connection as a family is important and valuable to us. We care about each other and want the best for one another. We acknowledge that each individual in the family:

- is a separate person, important, valuable, and lovable in his/her own right;
- has the right to grow and develop fully and to realize his/her fullest potential;
- has needs, desires, and preferences that will sometimes conflict with those of other members of the family;
- has the right to come up with solutions to problems that consider the rights, needs, desires, and preferences of other family members and that fall within safety, health, and growth guidelines set by parents and the law;
- agrees to negotiate respectfully with other members of the family, without resorting to the use of power, control, and violence.

Accordingly, we agree to:

- state our problems clearly and specifically, without blame;
- try to think of more than one solution for each problem, considering the point of view of everyone involved;
- discuss the possible effects of solutions;
- find solutions that make everyone feel as good about themselves as possible;

- implement agreements with sincere effort to make them work;
- stay cool if agreements don't always work at first;
- give ourselves and each other permission to make mistakes with occasional feedback, but without shame-inducing criticism;
- regularly re-evaluate solutions to see how they're working;

- think before we accuse;
- criticize only behavior, never the person or personality;
- make "I-statements," not "you-statements" about how we feel. Example: "I'm disappointed to hear this," not: "You make me furious;"
- listen to each other respectfully, especially when we disagree;
- never insult, call names, or make sarcastic remarks;
- stick to the topic;
- stay in the present and future--don't dredge up the past;
- hold dialogues, not lectures;
- try to answer each other, not withdraw or say, "I don't know," or, "Do whatever you want;"
- think realistically:
  - don't think the worst right away, consider evidence
  - avoid "all or nothing" or "black and white" thinking.
  - avoid the words, "never" and "always."

Signatures:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Everyone in the family should sign the agreement. Even two year olds can make a crayon mark.

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